



Once learned, never forgotten

Think and act in an environmentally-friendly way from an early age, and you will always do so: such is the message behind *The Kids' ISO 14000 Programme*. Drawing on the organizing principle of the ISO 14000 standards on environmental management systems, this innovative programme was created and is operated by the Japanese non-profit, non-governmental organization ArTech (International Art and Technology Cooperation Organization) in Tokyo.

The thinking goes thus: if you instil an environmentally positive attitude of mind in children, they will grow up with “conditioned reflexes” that will ensure environmental consciousness throughout their lives. They in turn will spread this consciousness to their school friends, around their families, and later to their own children, thus building up a broad national framework of support. And what better as a basis of this education than the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle, at the heart of the ISO 14000 standards on environmental management systems?

Children implement PDCA in their own homes to:

- measure environmental aspects such as water and energy consumption;
- set targets to reduce negative impacts;
- achieve concrete results and compare them with the target;

- draw lessons from the experience in order to make further improvements.

Children in this way learn by experience that they can reduce negative environmental impacts and improve environmental performance. The programme, that is suitable for children from the age of 10, comprises four graded levels (introductory, primary, middle and highest) with the children progressing from one step to the next with the aid of workbooks and materials. The work is permanently evaluated and those that reach the final goal are awarded a Certificate from the Kids' ISO 14000 Programme International Committee.

The Kids' ISO 14000 Programme encourages participants to network with children engaged in the programme in other schools and communities, both nationally and internationally. Children learn by direct experience that cooperation and teamwork, regardless of frontiers, multiplies the efficiency and effectiveness of their environmental management efforts.

Tangible proof

And it works! The proof: 50 000 Japanese children, and the number is growing exponentially on the international as well as the national level, have adopted this approach and it has tangibly and demonstrably helped to preserve the environment. Professor Takaya Kawabe, President of Ar-Tech,

the originators and operators of the project, says: “It is evident that the environmental education of children and young people is now one of the keys to the solution of global environmental problems and for achieving sustainable development.”

The secret? Involving the children, giving them a “road map” that they can develop individually and opening them up to networking with others, locally, nationally and internationally, working towards a similar goal of preserving the environment, ensuring minimum damage is done to it, and promoting sustainable development.

Prof. Kawabe explains: “The three principal aims of the Kids' ISO 14000 Programme are:

- firstly, to stimulate environmental awareness among children;
- secondly, to teach children to implement a simplified form of the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle at the heart of ISO 14001 and use it to monitor and reduce energy and water consumption in their homes, and,
- thirdly, to encourage the formation of networks of these children, both locally and worldwide, in order for them to work together on global environmental issues.”

The ISO role

With a view to expanding the implementation of this Kids' ISO 14000 Programme, and broadening the use of ISO 14000 principles through application of them by children from an early age on a worldwide scale, ISO is cooperating in the programme and helping to promote it. The United Nations University (UNU) is co-operating on it, and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) also supports it. In 2003, ISO Secretary-General Alan Bryden and ArTech President Prof. Takaya Kawabe signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Tokyo, Japan, confirming an earlier agreement between the two organizations in October 2002, since when ISO has lent its name and logo to the programme.

