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Estonian high school students' attitude towards unemployment 1991-2012:

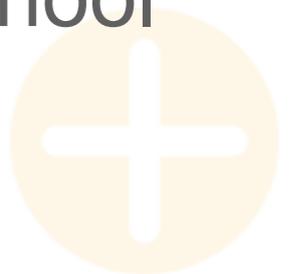
Pessimistic attitude as an educational problem

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Authors

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Background

- ▶ Estonian people as citizens of the EU sense instability in their everyday lives.
- ▶ The media amplifies this feeling by emphasising that the “world order” is in crisis.
- ▶ Events in the world surrounding us have made people think about fundamental problems concerning the existence of our planet.
- ▶ Unemployment is one of the global problems which has distinctively come forth during the economic crisis.



Background

- ▶ According to Statistics Estonia the rate of unemployment in 2012 was 10.2%.
- ▶ Unemployment of the 15- to 24-year-old was 20.9%.
- ▶ In the second quarter of 2013 the rate of unemployment fell to 8.1%, and that of the youth to 16.1%.
- ▶ Unemployment has fallen steadily since 2010, that of males most of all. But it is still a problem.



Why did we study adolescents?

- ▶ Adolescence is a unique period of development with regard to future orientation.
- ▶ Social norms and expectations push adolescents toward future-oriented thinking.
- ▶ They are a social group that can be most readily influenced (school and media).
- ▶ The present high school students are the designers of the future.





Method

- ▶ In 2012 we conducted a survey among high school students in order to learn their attitude towards global problems.
- ▶ One of those was unemployment.
- ▶ The survey involved 1,391 (6.19% of all) high school students (aged 16 to 19), 578 were male and 813 female.
- ▶ In the period from 1991 to 1995 there were 1,943 high school students engaged in the similar survey.



Method

- ▶ We used *A World Problem Questionnaire* (Chlewiński & Zaleski, 1991) in which 32 global problems were worded.
- ▶ In 2012 Martin Talvik supplemented this questionnaire by adding 7 statements describing „new“ global problems, the earlier 32 statements were kept the same in order to guarantee comparability.





Brief titles of the problems

- ▶ „Old“ (32):

Nuclear war, Demography, Ecology, Cancer, Civilization diseases, New diseases, Natural disasters, Psychological diseases, Prejudices, Religious conflicts, Personal Alienation, **Unemployment**, Family crisis, Drug addiction, Resources Exploitation, Manipulation, Alcoholism, Interpersonal contacts, Poor-rich conflict, Life standard differences, Women's role, Family crisis & delinquency, Cultural and moral deterioration, Conformism, Industrial waste, Professional diseases, Folklore disappearance, Nationalistic conflicts, Illiteracy, AIDS, Secularization, Violence & terrorism.



Brief titles of the problems

- ▶ „New“ (7):
 1. Global warming
 2. Demise of small nations
 3. Holes in the ozone layer
 4. Internet addiction
 5. Dangers of genetically modified organisms (GMOs)
 6. Waste
 7. Space refuse





Method

- ▶ In the survey students had to answer if the issue described in the survey was important for them on the 5-point-scale in which 1 = „not important at all“, 3 = „leaves me indifferent“ and 5 = „the issue is very important to me“.
- ▶ It was also asked how the importance of the problem would change in the period of 50 years on a percentage scale from -100% to +100% by 10% step.
- ▶ Responses on the percentage scale were regarded to reflect optimism or pessimism concerning the future (-100 to 0 = optimism; 0 to +100 = pessimism).



Questionnaire

Problem No 12, **Unemployment:**

New technologies and computers eliminate human labour, which leads to unemployment and the impoverishment of many families.

1 2 3 4 5

-100% -90 -80 -70 -60 -50 -40 -30 -20 -10 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100%





Results

- ▶ Students responded that when compared with today the issue of unemployment becomes more important +35.73% on the scale of -100% to +100%.
- ▶ Unemployment left males relatively untouched (M=3.23)
- ▶ Females considered unemployment important issue (M=3.82).
- ▶ In the list of global problems unemployment was on the 10th place in 2012.
- ▶ In 1991 it had been on the 17th place.

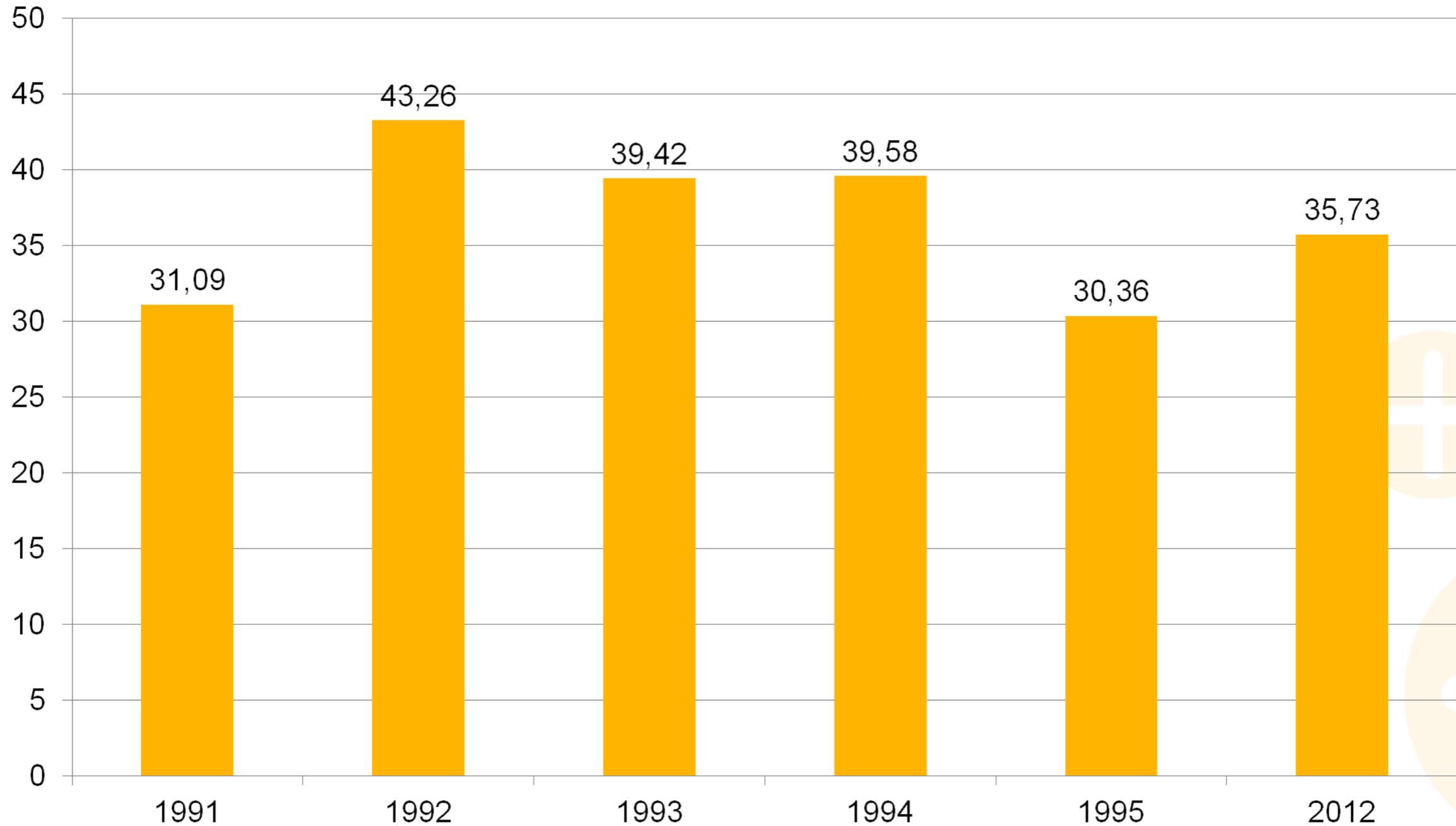


Results

- ▶ Concerning future prognosis the responses of males and females diverged as well.
- ▶ Males thought that in 50 years unemployment will be more important than today about a quarter (M=+26.01%).
- ▶ Females estimated that the problem will be worse than today about a half (M=+42.64%).



Differences in students' prognosis on the scale of optimism-pessimism concerning unemployment





Registered rate of unemployment in different regions and the correlation with the perception of importance of the problem by high school students (2012)

Region	Registered rate of unemployment	Mean value of importance of unemployment
District of Võrumaa	7,1%	3,87
Tartu	7,8%	3,53
Island Saaremaa	9,2%	3,33
Tallinn	9,6%	3,21
District of Põlvamaa	11,5%	3,71
District of Valgamaa	15,3%	3,69
District of East-Virumaa	17,5%	3,63
Estonia in total	10,2%	3,58



Regional differences

- ▶ Unemployment is more important among rural youth than among the youth living in Tallinn.
- ▶ In districts of East-Virumaa, Valgamaa and Põlvamaa where the actual rate of unemployment is high, students consider the issue more important.
- ▶ In Saaremaa and Tallinn where the issue leaves students indifferent, the rate of unemployment is lower than is the Estonian average.
- ▶ In Tartu and Võru where the rate of unemployment was the lowest among the cities the issue was still relatively important.
- ▶ Thus we cannot draw a simple conclusion that the issue is deemed more important there where the actual rate of unemployment is the highest.

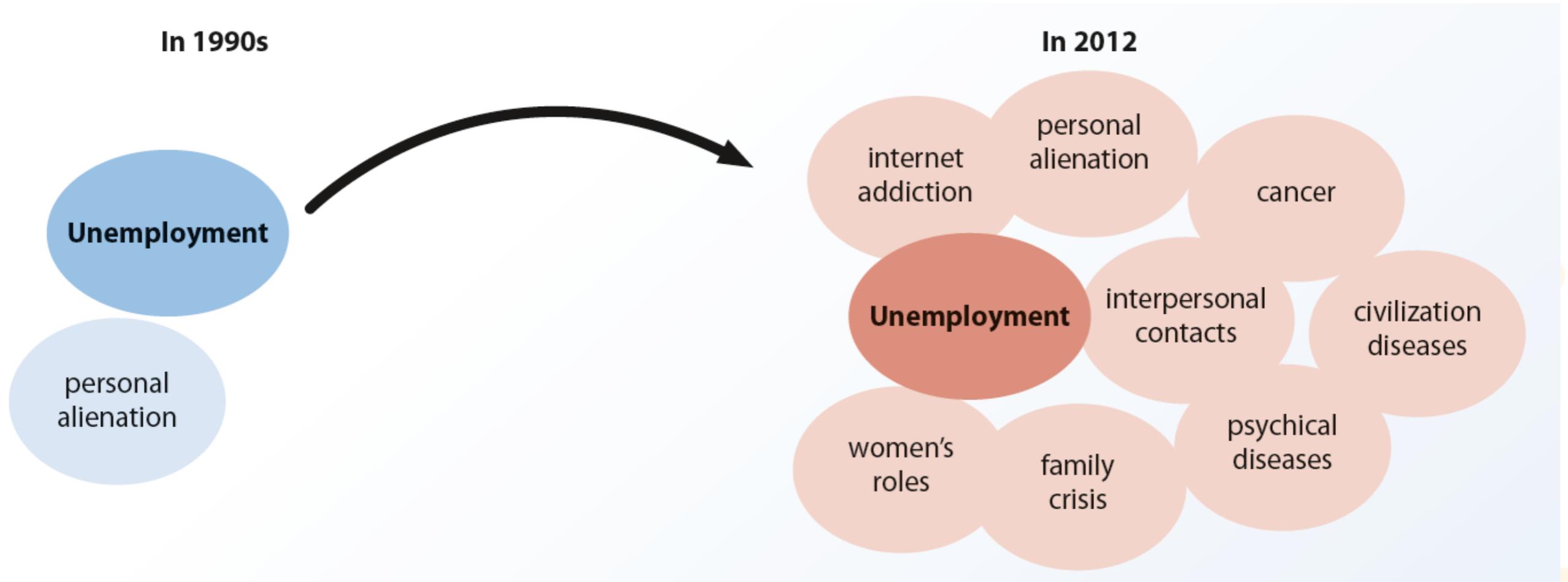


The semantic shift of the problem

- ▶ In the 1990s unemployment together with personal alienation formed one factor.
- ▶ In 2012 a significant shift becomes noticeable. In addition to personal alienation unemployment is part of the same factor as cancer, civilization diseases, psychical diseases, family crisis, interpersonal contacts, women's roles, Internet addiction.
- ▶ This shift indicates that young people have become more conscious of the issue of unemployment, and some may have experienced it via their relatives or family members.



The semantic shift of the unemployment problem



Unemployment is not any more a problem of non-active and closed individuals but can be associated with various interpersonal contacts and family problems. It can cause diseases and escape into virtual world. The semantic field of unemployment has become considerably wider over the past 20 years.



Conclusion and discussion

- ▶ In students' perception the issue of unemployment becomes more important +35.73% in the future.
- ▶ The year 2012 showed general negativistic background what obviously emerges from the economic depression and crisis in the European Union, the monetary reform and purchase power decrease in Estonia.
- ▶ High school students obtain knowledge about crucial problems either from school, direct living environment or via the media.
- ▶ Individual thinking processes are affected by cultural and general models existing in the corresponding region and national group.



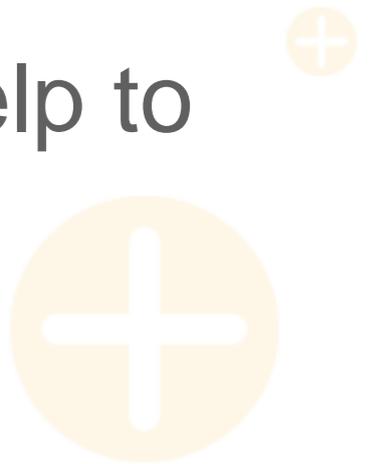
Conclusion and discussion

- ▶ Women deem problem more important than men and their prognosis is more pessimistic.
- ▶ It can be caused either by social desirability (Talvik, 1995), lower fear threshold (Chlewinski, 1993) or higher anxiety level what women usually have (Hang & Hauser, 1991).
- ▶ High school students from South-Estonia and East-Virumaa are more pessimistic than those living in Tallinn.
- ▶ The factor of material wellbeing could affect the results of our survey. Nurmi (1987) and Beal (2011) have referred in their research that future-oriented cognitions may vary across socio-economic statuses.
- ▶ Attitude towards unemployment is connected to father's education, financial resources of the family and amount of technical appliances at home.



The essential questions emerging from our survey

- ▶ How to prepare students for employment in a complex and constantly changing world?
- ▶ How innovative entrepreneurial education can help to develop jobs, careers and economic growth?
- ▶ What's the price of growth?
- ▶ How and if the growth can be sustainable?





VS





The essential questions emerging from our survey

- ▶ How education can help to release or conquer the fear of unemployment? Which specialities are “hard and fast”?
- ▶ What is the destiny of the so called “soft specialities”?
- ▶ Our youth believe that the entrepreneurial environment after 50 years will be characterized by high rate of unemployment. Estonians have been more pessimistic about unemployment than other nations throughout 20 years. How to teach all the aforementioned things to pessimists?
- ▶ If one foresees a negative future, it may be hard for him to work to improve it. Do we have to change the negativistic attitude at first?
- ▶ How the attitude is connected to the coping strategies?
- ▶ We encourage further research on these topics.



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Thank you for your attention!

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