

# Junior Achievement Estonia study programme "7 Steps"







**JA  
Eesti**

Member of  
JA Worldwide

Junior Achievement Estonia (JA) Foundation has been working since 1992 to ensure that more entrepreneurs become educated in Estonia and that all young people get the necessary financial knowledge, experience in business and an entrepreneurial outlook for a successful life already at school.

# The problem

It is known that Estonian children are very good students. As the high results in the PISA tests show year after year.

However, preparation for life tends to remain one-sided at the end of education. Yes, teachers try hard, children try, but fumbling around the world piece by piece does not help to shape a young person's adaptable, curious and healthy attitude towards life.

Also, the joy of learning and the desire to discover often becomes less and less as the education progresses. The fear of being wrong outweighs the courage to experiment.

How to root it out and provide young people with a more comprehensive education?





# The bigger problem

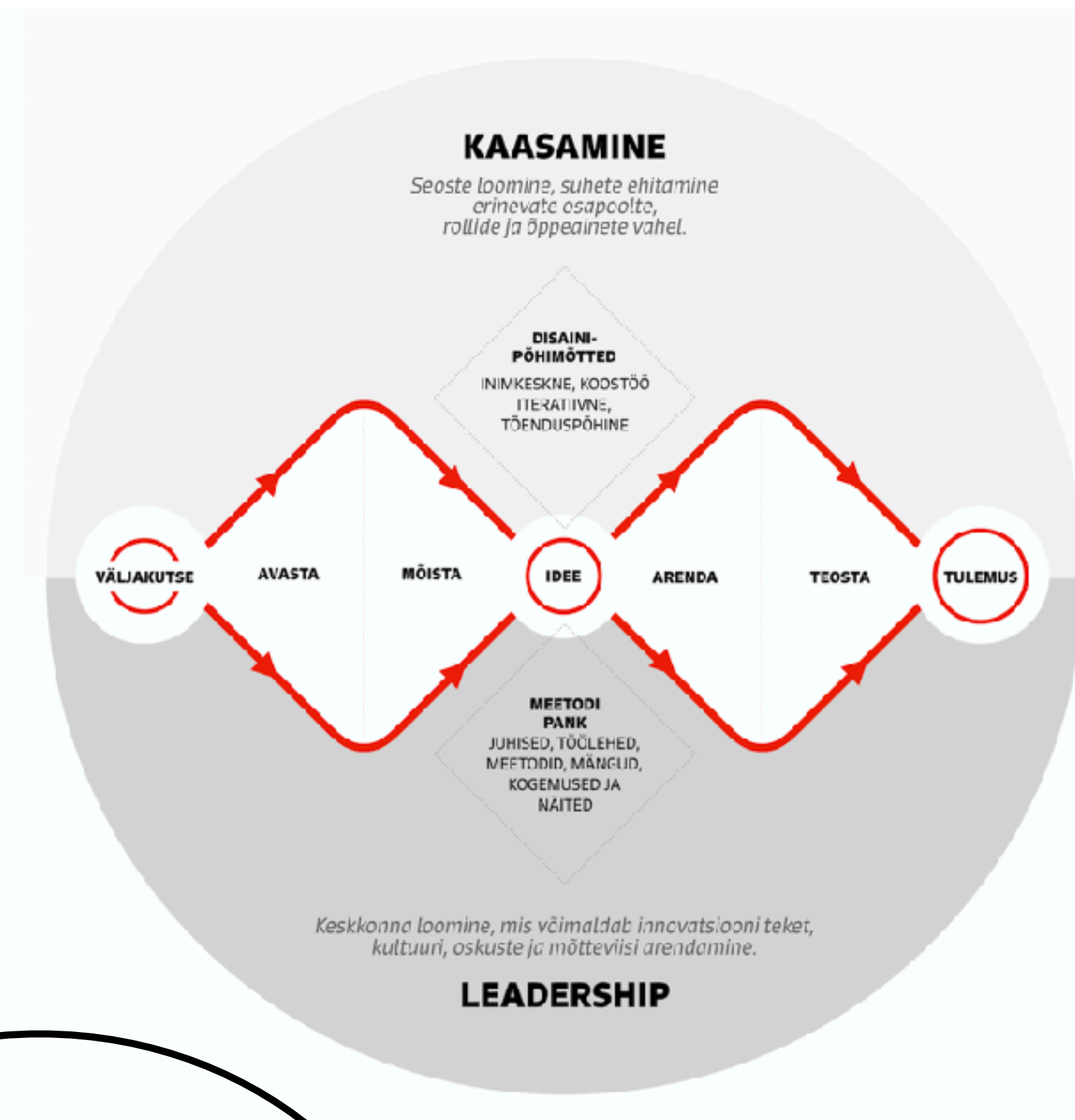
Traditional education, especially economic education, focuses on learning theories without actually applying them. More applied programmes, on the other hand, present the problem and a large part of the solution to the student in order to prove the effectiveness of the learned theories.

In this way, we do not raise creative young people who can confidently deal with unexpected situations.



# How to support change?

Walk your talk as designers –unlock change with design tools, giving both teachers and young people the structure, tools and knowledge to do the same on their own in the future. Thus, we started to update the set of JA study materials.



The purpose of upgrading the "7 Steps" programme is to bring the entire system to the principles of design thinking.



# Insights

The programme itself was good, but from the point of view of design thinking, it was not so much necessary to change the content of the programme, but rather to add principles on the basis of which it is edited. In this way, we can ensure that the experience of creating a mini-mini-company at the final stage of the programme is useful even if you do not achieve great success and do not make a lot of money.

## Principles and learning outcomes on which to base the programme:

- The ability to understand and formulate a problem is the basis of everything.
- The ability to collect, understand and respond to feedback helps to develop.
- Effort guarantees achievement and achievement is cool.
- Divergent/Convergent thinking and when to do what.
- Iterations are our friends, the more there are, the better the result.
- Proving is continuous work (e. don't tell, show)
- In order to get a good idea, you need to generate many ideas first.
- In order to do well, it is necessary to experiment, to prototype.
- Most ideas and experiments end up in the trash - it's only a failure if it turns out too late and if you don't learn from it.

# The scheme is the same in each step

Although the process/story structure is always the same at each step, the content of the challenges, the range of ideas and possibilities, and the complexity of execution grow with knowledge and confidence



In the first step, we can say that the engager and the leader is the teacher/instructor.



In the following steps, however, this role gradually moves on to the students themselves.

...



In the final step, the mini mini-companies are created 100% by the children themselves.

# The journey, or our more-than-7-steps

(No worries, we make it short)

Bringing concept of design thinking holistically into the primary school learning materials included

- Working with the manual, adaptation, creation of missing information and the design matrix.
- The creation of the book "Raul and his friends".
- Creation of work materials for both students and teachers together with the teachers' working group, which included teachers from schools all over Estonia.
- The work of designing and illustrating educational materials, step by step, week after week, for almost two years.





# Outcome

"7 Steps" programme for students in the grades I - VI, which offers hands-on learning and a broad-based perspective on the world from the point of view of a citizen, employee, and consumer.

For the first time in Estonia, the "7 Steps" programme brings design thinking to school lessons, teaching children to collect ideas, make choices, think critically, experiment, give up and start again.

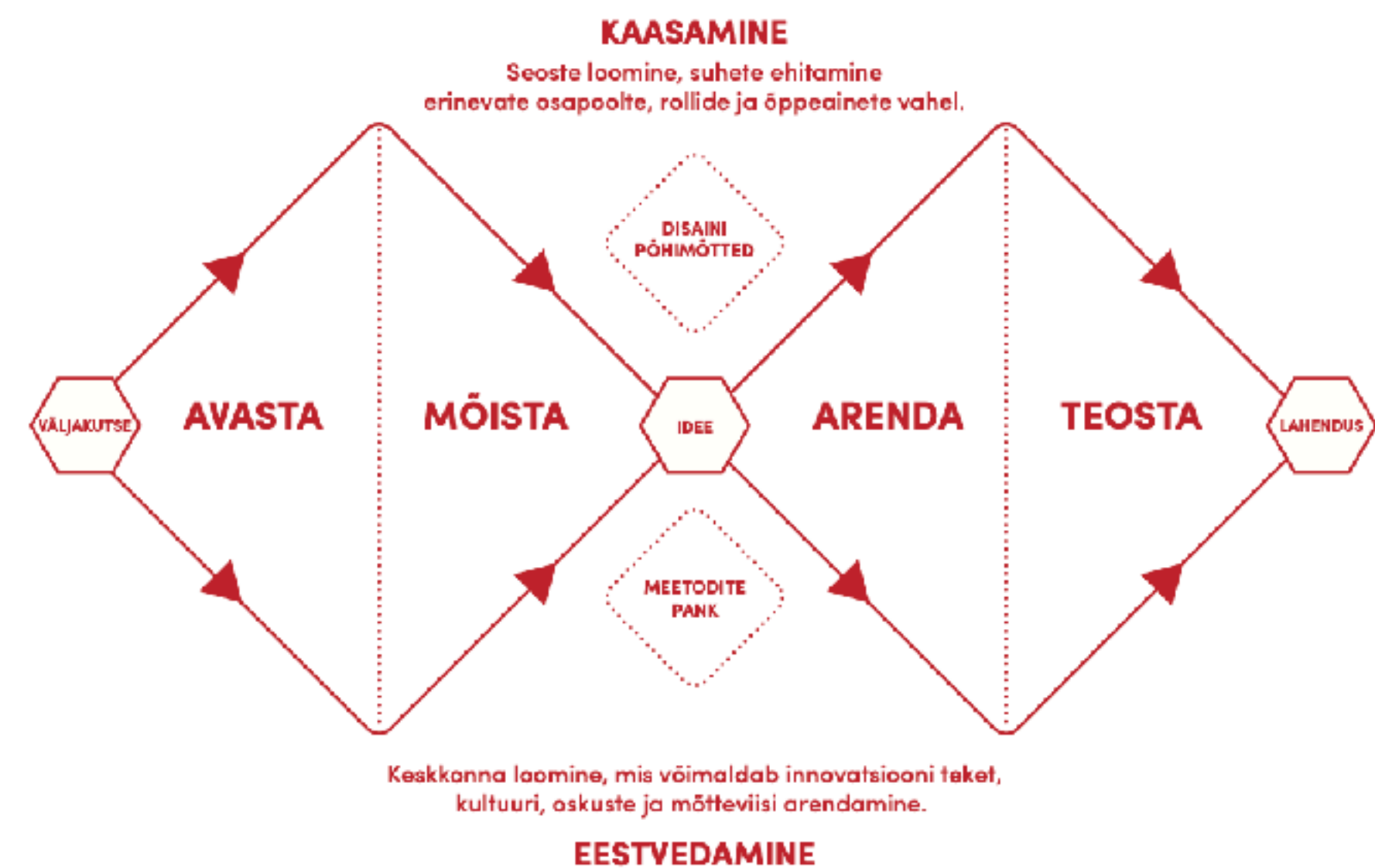


Disainiprotsess, kuigi kirjeldatud lineaarselt, on oma olemuselt õppimine ning alati on võimalik minna tagasi mistahes punkti, kui õpitu viitab, et varem on kusagil tehtud viga või kui uus informatsioon aitaks valida mõne teise idee.



Õppimise protsessis ei ole võimalik hüppata asjade käigust ette.

„Mina ei ole konn ja teie ei ole jänkud, nii et palun ärme hüppa asjadest ette!  
Lõpuks on kõik äge. Kui veel ei ole äge, siis ei ole veel lõpp!“



From JA I step teacher's book

# **Why are the "7 Steps" good for both the student and the teacher?**

Through the "7 Steps" programme, one learns step by step about one's own skills, wishes and needs, the roles of family members, the functioning of the community, professions, Estonian resources, companies and entrepreneurship, thus preparing oneself for successful coping in the work and business environment.

Through "7 Steps", students' general competences develop - digital competence, self-definition, communication, cultural and value competence, social and civic competence, learning competence.

The "7 Steps" programme can be taught in an integrated way in mathematics, mother tongue and humanities classes, and various activities can be carried out in art and craft classes.



# What are the "7 Steps"?

The programme has seven 12-15 hour parts to grades I - VI to teach the future skills.

By observing the child's development, it is easier to move to from simple to more complex, from individual to general, and from the immediate surroundings to a more abstract economic space.



**Sammud kasvavad koos lastega**

- 1. Ourselves**
- 2. Our family**
- 3. Our home**
- 4. Our city & municipality**
- 5. Our county & country**
- 6. Our mini-minicompany**
- 7. Our world**

# Diverse toolbox

The teacher's handbook contains an introduction to the programme and materials, activity plans and ways to integrate topics with different subjects, as well as recommendations for volunteering in class or on a study tour.



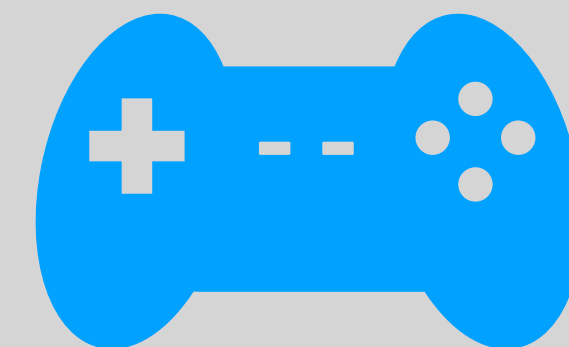
Printed teachers'  
book (7)



Worksheets and  
physical learning  
materials for students  
(100+)



Opiq.ee digital  
concept maps,  
guides and posters



Digital game  
"Our home" for  
students



# Impact

Students who have completed the programme are brave and enterprising young people who can spot both more and less critical problems and dare to search and experiment, finding solutions to them. Design thinking is not an exotic bird to be admired from afar, but a completely normal process.





# Where are we today?

The transition to learning materials has been gradual. Already today, the programme is used in more than 70 schools across Estonia, including several classes and teachers involved in one school.

Materials for steps 1-3 are also created in Russian and are suitable for use in language immersion classes.





# Feedback

"We feel good and safe because we have modern and interesting teaching material of a good standard, which is a pleasure to offer. The material is systematic, linking the development of entrepreneurship, understanding, design thinking, green and money wisdom, and work skills into one whole.

The programme offers new and additional knowledge year by year and step by step (progression model). The material is beautiful and convenient for the teacher to use. And what we learned ourselves - design thinking and using it to solve various problems and tasks."

**Kersti Loor**  
**JA Estonia CEO**



# Feedback

"Initially, when we wrote the design thinking material, it seemed that it might be too complicated and demanding material, will it still work? But while creating it, we were able to test different exercises and I must say that they work very well. And they work very well from the first grade.

I notice that children are much more adept at discovery and development, parts of the thinking process, and the more they practice, the more adept they become. With practice, they also become skilled in the process of understanding and execution. The value of the entire "7 Steps" programme is that it is designed from the ground up to be used holistically from grades one through six. There are no random things."

Silja Enok

Economics teacher, head of the 2nd grade at Vändra Gymnasium  
Enterprising teacher of the year 2020





# We keep going

Põltsamaa Ühisgimnaasium, where 678 students study, has been inspired by the programme and has taken it as the basis of its own general education and has built on it the rest of its education in primary classes. All their primary school teachers have completed the "7 Steps" training.

At the end of 2023, JA Estonia began cooperation with the Rural Development Foundation of Estonia, which supports the purchase of "7 steps" educational materials for rural schools worth nearly 20,000 euros over two years, which allows the programme to be extended to thousands more students and teachers.



We believe that if every student in Estonia starts solving their personal and professional challenges by first feeling sincere curiosity about the nature of the problem, we have taken significantly more than 7 steps closer to Estonia that is curious, empathetic and achieving great things.

For us, designers, however, it doesn't hurt to remind ourselves of the basics of the real economy.

**We thank the client and everyone involved for an extremely awesome, creative and educational experience.**

### **Kust tuleb raha?**

Kui sa miskit osta soovid,  
säästmisega tee sa proovi!  
Euro siit ja sendid sealt,  
veidi iga nurga pealt.

Või siis teeni tehes kooki,  
jäätist, küpsist, morsijooki,  
niida muru, kasta lilli,  
mängi kasvõi torupilli!

Nii saad täpselt õigeks ajaks,  
kokku summa, mida vaja!  
Siis saad osta vinge palli,  
korraldada uisuralli!

Ära tühja kuluta,  
rahapakke tuuluta!  
Nii ei eales osta seda,  
mida süda ihkab enam

*Origilan poem "Step 1 : I, myself", author Janno Siimar*



# Data

**Period:** August 2020 – September 2022

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