



# **Critical thinking development and character education within ELT at the upper secondary level**

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1



**Brief**  
**Introduction**

# INTRODUCTION

## State Educational Programme document

- ensures a balanced development of the personality of pupils, and
- sets out the general aims and the key competences.

## character education

an excellent tool with which to achieve the set goals.



2



**Education and  
Key terms**

# EDUCATION

"a process in which the pupil acquires knowledge and activities, develops knowledge and skills, and develops physical and mental abilities and interests" (Petlák , 2004, p. 31) .

not only about **theoretical knowledge**,

basic aspects

1. social - preparing the individual for vocation and societal integration, and
2. pedagogical - cultivation of a person's will and character.

not only **knowledge** and **skills**, but also **habits, attitudes, beliefs**, the formation of **a person's personality** and **character**.

"every person forms his or her relationship to the world, nature, society, and self" (Cirbes, 1990, p. 60) .

# Terms

## character education

"a set of personality traits that generate specific moral emotions, inform motivation, and influence an individual's behavior"  
(Arthur, 2017, p. 140).

## virtues

specific traits that make up character; morals and values attached to society, spirituality, and culture

## critical thinking

„differing conceptions of the same basic concept: careful thinking directed to a goal” (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2018).

A large, bold, blue number '3' is centered in the upper half of the image. A small, white, stylized snowflake is positioned on the top left shoulder of the number. The background is a dark blue gradient with scattered white stars and snowflakes of various sizes.

**Character  
education**

# Character education

## educated person

a high level of proficiency in a profession, and extra for the exercise of any profession.

Beyond theoretical knowledge and practical skills - a person's *personality, qualities, attitudes, culture of spirit* and *who they are*.

**CHARACTER**  **character education**





- a part of many educational activities – all explicit and implicit learning activities,
- former Czechoslovakia - Moral Education and Civics,
- nowadays - Ethics and Civic Education and
- a consensus in society - the role of the moral and civic character of the individual is crucial.

# learner

**Explicit activities** - learning about virtues or other concepts related to character development within a particular subject.

**Implicit activities** - learning about character education within other subjects.

**character education** represents a kind of umbrella that overarches all subjects

**ideal** - a combination of both types through the whole teaching process - more effective in the long run.

**benefits** – confronted in various disciplines and subjects with moral questions or dilemmas to be solved and with practical demonstrations of how a moral person behaves in life

# virtues



- the ability to identify and list the virtues,
- to recognize situations in which one of the virtues needs to be used,
- to name how one feels when doing so, and
- to take example from others who act virtuously.

The very fact that a pupil can name a particular virtue is an excellent prerequisite for using that virtue one day.



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**ELT, CT and Character  
education**

# ELT, CT and character education



- diversity of content,
- language as a means of communication,
- a source of topics, ideas and stimuli,
- not only linguistics and literature, but also a character improvement for pupils, and
- „language is seen as a potential source of personal and cultural enrichment for human beings, which is a prerequisite for further education. Language is a sign of national and individual identity, a means of communication and professional realization, as well as a means of expressing feelings and emotions“ (Štátny vzdelávací program, ISCED 3, online).



the structures of character education in ELT – moral virtues

- ***personal and cultural enrichment:*** courage, justice, honesty, integrity,
- ***professional realisation:*** commitment, self-confidence and teamwork,
- ***feelings and emotions*** (communication): compassion, gratitude, humility,
- ***core competencies:*** practical wisdom, and
- ***open attitude towards others:*** courtesy, respect.



**humanity**



**courage**



**honesty**



**self-discipline**



**gratitude**



**justice**



+

Knowledge of one's own culture and awareness of one's own values.

Promoting empathy and tolerance towards other cultures, combating stereotypes.

-

Availability of materials supporting character education and critical thinking.

The diversity of pupils - their characters, attitudes and opinions.

Inconsistent approach of the teaching staff.

A school without a vision for character education.





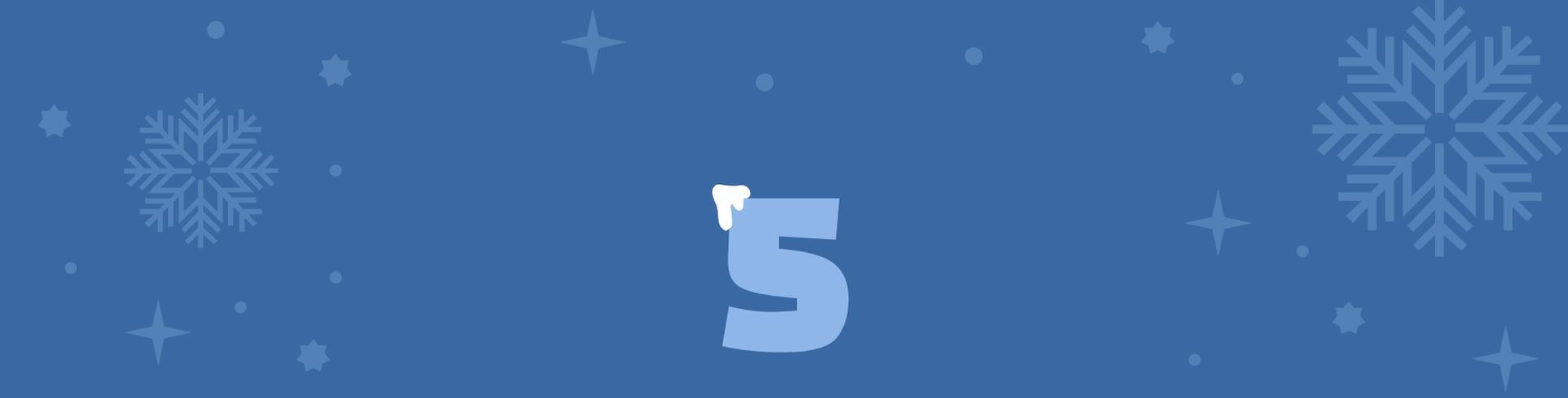
- a meta-analysis of **52 studies** examined associations between **explicit teaching and teaching** where elements of **character education** were present with a focus on increasing love, integrity, self-esteem, discipline, and compassion (Jeynes, 2017),
- a total of **225,779** students aged 5-18, mostly from the **US, Canada, Europe, and China,**
- character education has contributed to **improved academic achievement**, particularly for older pupils in **mathematics and reading. (literature)**, and
- assumptions – improvement at school, which contributed to their **well-being** and hence to their **better academic performance.**

# Character education developed via language skills



. qualities **developed** :

*politeness, creativity, communicativeness,  
logical thinking, independence, diligence,  
receptivity, creativity, self – confidence,  
present receptiveness...*



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**Concrete  
examples**

## Concrete examples of how can virtues and CT be developed



- **reading stories** such as *Robin Hood*, *Anne of Green Gable*, *I am Malala* storytelling and writing, dramatisation, posters, interviews, modelling... to bring to life all the virtues of the characters.
- **thank you email writing** – someone (e.g., famous, they know, parents, siblings, a teacher, a friend) who did something that was special for a learner and helped them get through this difficult time.
- **cyber-phronesis** - the virtues should be applied to online behaviour and dilemmas facing online, reflections on our personal experiences of them, and considerations of the ethical features of an ideal digital world (more <https://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/2909/projects/cultivating-cyber-phronesis>).

# Character education and CT



- "The Social Dilemma" (2020) movie - a great deal of stimulus for learners.
  - experts on modern technology - negative consequences of social networks - Google, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn - now becoming an increasing threat to society,
  - the aim of IT companies
    - ✓ to capture the attention of their users for as long as possible,
    - ✓ the polarisation of society,
    - ✓ the proliferation of hoaxes, and
    - ✓ the rise of depression and other mental illnesses, especially among young people.
- *Activities*
  - a stimulating discussion and various activities,
  - writing a review based on the facts – showing agreement or disagreement

**CRITICAL ATTITUDES – EVIDENCE - JUSTIFICATION**



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**Summary**

# to conclude



## *goal of character education*

- to improve students' behavior, and their well-being in school, and in life.
- achieved more effectively by combining schooling and school „philosophy“
- not only in the classroom but in all other activities - sporting events, dining, helping weaker classmates, enviro-activities, and
- gaining - attractiveness and, creates favourable conditions for holistic development of learners.

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**THANKS**

**DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?**

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