> " **Everyone Matters** "

IN Focus

EQUITY IN EDUCATION

Equity in education is when a student receives the support and resources needed to achieve academic success, regardless of their social, economic & academic circumstances. If present, equity teaching helps *all students* perform at the most optimal level.

There are *two main pillars* that are closely related to equity in education:

- **fairness** (*prohibiting discrimination based on gender, religion, ethnicity or socioeconomic status*)
- **inclusion** (*ensuring a basic minimum standard of education for every student*)

Working towards equity in education involves *examining biases* as well as *creating inclusive academic environments* to reduce achievement gaps in order for students to thrive.

For example, educators & assessment gurus may *take note of* standardized & timed test-performances for ALL students, including low-income backgrounds, & work towards creating more *equitable assessment solutions.*

Equity in education involves making sure *under-represented students feel represented in the course material*, are able to *access and engage with content in and out of class*, as well as *feel comfortable interacting* with peers, teachers and the wider community.

It is also important to *teach equity to students*. *Books* are always a great way to read together, talk about the differences and similarities between the book characters and your students using easy, clear language.

WONDER WORD

Diversity - is about the **what;** it focuses on the makeup of the students in a class and includes diversity of gender, soco-economic status, physical and neurological diversity.

Inclusion- is about the **how**; i.e. the creation of an education space and learning environment that enables each student to learn in his/her own way, participate and thrive.

Equality - means each student or group is given the **exact same** TLM method, resources or opportunities. It refers to *balance, symmetry and evenness* or '*same in all respects*'.

Equity - recognizes that each student has different needs, interests, abilities and allocates the **best resources** and **opportunities needed for each one** to learn and grow at his/her own pace. It refers to the principle of *fairness*.

The APRIL '24 theme - *Importance of Homework & Home-work*
Send your contributions - an effective classroom strategy / class humour / vocab word / a featured article / book titles / new trends, to : **team@qedrak.com**

"To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential, if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin."

— Bell Hooks

QED Talk 1

NEP 2020's focus on
EQUITY IN EDUCATION

MS. SHIVANI SHIRKE

*Mentor at **AURA** - a registered non-profit learning resource center based in Vadodara, Gujarat. From 2007 AURA has worked to empower underserved children, youth, teachers and parents for self-leadership and social emotional learning. They reach out to nearly 1000 beneficiaries with intense work that helps to develop their self-connection, their creativity and a compassionate way to live in community.*

◼ *Let us begin with this typical image about Equity – Please comment on this.*
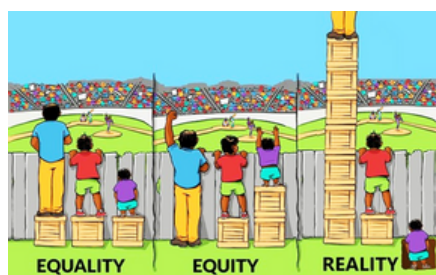
Let me begin by saying that whatever I share here,comes from my own observations and experiences in the field of education for the last 18 years. These images are evocative of the situation in our society, so they are relevant. They help us to see the systemic issues and they were created to support people to understand *what equity is*. Historically, when inequality was named, *'equal' opportunity* was created. But that too did not work. For instance - women joining the workforce as 'equals'... this is not a flawless arrangement. Women's bodies are different, women play many different roles in society - so just giving them an equal size box as all others in the line, does not help them to 'see' the game.

They need structures and systems that create equity, that take into consideration that *we are all different and need different ways through which we can bring our fullest contribution to the world* or have our fullest experience of the world. Creating equity is a complex and ongoing task, as it is about *being considerate towards different needs and potential* and these are dynamic.

◼ *Is there EQUITY in the current school classrooms? Or has it just remained an idealistic word?*

It is a very generic question. So I will choose to speak from my observations and experiences with children. At AURA we consciously and mindfully design sessions to bring more participation and engagement into our work. For instance, the space that we use for our work has no vertical hierarchy, we sit in a circle with everyone able to see each other, including the facilitator. When we do this the message that we give is that *everyone is included in the circle, there is a purpose and we are connected*.

Our designs are planned in a way that equip children to participate through different forms of expression such as verbal communication, non verbal communication, through the medium of words, poetry, art or music. In our design, we also include pair-share, small group discussions, and large group discussions allowing more opportunities for children to engage.

◼ *What teaching dispositions, judgments, and activities do you feel teachers need to help ALL students, thrive and feel valued?*

There are many gaps in our education system. This gap leads to inequality and violence, and a dysfunctional educational system that leaves many behind. One of the core values at AURA is that, "*children thrive when they know they matter"* (when I say the words even now, my heart starts to stir). We as mentors and teachers need to *create learning spaces for children where their FEAR can be transformed into the energy of LOVE*...because that is the answer to a more fulfilling and powerful way of living and learning. It is essential children know they matter, that they have potential, and they cannot be defined by their report cards or their life circumstances. They need to know that if they receive compassion, understanding and a chance, they can give their best back into the world. They become aware that the *light lies within and they can shine if they believe in themselves*.

◼ *Do you think the current Teacher Qualification Programmes equip teachers to understand – bias, differentiation and equity?*

Again, let me reiterate that we need an overhaul in the way our structures are designed. We need to move from result oriented learning to more *heart based learning*. We need more *conscious and mindful interventions* for the holistic growth of a child.

> **"**
>
> *Equity in the classroom means making sure every student has the resources and support they need to be successful; and individual factors don't hold back students from reaching their full learning potential.*

■ *Your Final Word....*

It is only with the heart we can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye. - Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, The Little Prince.

I like how this quote brings so much wisdom into something that is so simple; that true *understanding goes beyond physical* - our emotions, our intuition play a crucial role in how we perceive and understand the world.

QED Feed

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN BRINGING EQUITY

Technology plays a significant role in *promoting equity in the classroom* by addressing access to resources, personalized learning, inclusive teaching practices.

Digital Resources and Open Educational Materials:
- Provide students with access to digital textbooks, online resources, open educational materials to ensure all students have equal access to resources.
- Utilize platforms that offer free or laffordable ow-cost content

Personalized Learning Platforms:
- Implement adaptive learning technologies that tailor content and pacing to individual student needs, allowing for personalized learning experiences.
- Provide differentiated instruction through educational apps and tools that cater to diverse learning styles and abilities.

Online Collaboration and Communication:
- Foster collaboration among students through online platforms, discussion forums, collaborative tools...breaking down geographical and social barriers.
- Encourage communication between teachers, students, and parents using digital channels, ensuring that information is accessible to everyone.

Assistive Technology:
- Integrate assistive technologies, such as text-to-speech software, speech recognition tools, and screen readers, to support diverse learning needs.
- Ensure that digital content is accessible and follows *Universal Design* principles to accommodate students with disabilities.

Data-driven Decision Making:
- Use data analytics to identify achievement gaps and track student progress, allowing educators to tailor interventions and support to specific needs.
- Implement technology tools for formative assessment to gather real-time feedback and adjust teaching strategies accordingly.

Virtual Learning Opportunities:
- Provide virtual field trips, guest speakers, and online courses to expose students to a variety of experiences, regardless of location or status.
- Enable remote learning options, especially for students who may face challenges attending school regularly.

Equitable Access to Devices and Connectivity:
- Ensure that all students have access to devices and a reliable internet connection, through school-provided resources / community partnerships.
- Address the "digital divide" by working towards equitable distribution of technology resources both in and outside the classroom.

By carefully integrating technology in these ways, educators can create a more inclusive and equitable learning environment for all students. *******

NEP 2020's focus on
EQUITY IN EDUCATION

MS. PARAS MAHENDRU

Freelance Educational Consultant & Teacher Trainer,
Founder - PreschoolGuru Education Consultancy,
Implements Inclusive & Equitable education in NGOs, Anganwadis

◼ *As an educator working in varied educational spaces, what in your view are the various SOURCES of INEQUITY in a classroom?*

Equity in education means, *ensuring fairness.* The list of sources for inequity in education is long. I will broadly highlight the *top contributors to inequity* in our classrooms :

Culture

Culture influences our priorities; it determines our value system and most importantly it has a huge impact on our expectations. With all the pivotal changes at policy level, the change in attitude towards girls' education is slow. Even today higher education is not an absolute must for many girls; gender inequity. Culture interconnects with socioeconomic background. When a family with limited resources is at a crossroad, they habitually priorities allocating resources to boys. This barrier to resources, leads to disparities in educational outcomes for a girl child.

Compassion is embedded in our culture; this value is reflected in our expectations and attitude towards the education of children with disability. Instead of ensuring necessary accommodations in the physical environment, curriculum and assessment, so that a child with disability enjoys participation in classrooms, we tend to pity them and make concessions. It is this very pity that results in inequity.

Cultural biases and stereotypes influence educator's approach and expectations of certain minority groups. These implicit biases result in a differentiated treatment and also affect their expectations. Cultural biases fail to create an environment of belonginess; a sense of belonginess is essential for equitable educational practices.

Urban-rural divide

Another big reason behind inequity is the urban-rural divide. Unequal distribution of resources, limited access to technology, limited opportunities for teacher training, scarce infrastructure, inadequate transportation services or poor accessibility to these services and a far more pronounced gender stereotypes in rural settings; factors leading to inequity in education.

Infrastructure

As mentioned above, our values and expectations influence our commitment towards a cause. This lack of commitment is reflected in inadequate and/or poor-quality infrastructure in our schools, transportation services and public buildings. Accessible environment is a pre-requisite for equity. Public and school transport are not disable friendly, poor sanitation facilities in some schools, absence of ramps or incorrect ramps in our public and school buildings, lack of disabled friendly school environment all are reasons behind inequity in our classrooms.

Curriculum

A tremendous effort has been put into making curriculum inclusive. We see cultural representations in our textbooks, gender stereotypes are challenged however, we have miles to go before we reach our goal. Often, it is the implicit curriculum that promotes biases and stereotypes. At policy level a lot of change has happened. However, certain practices are embedded in our education system and therefore, we still are not using curriculum to empower children; critical thinking and social just are necessary tools to challenge inequity in education; these are sketchily present in classrooms.

Making learning material accessible to all is another challenge. Learning experiences have to be relevant. Due to lack of resources, training, awareness and commitment to equity in education many educational institutions continue to resort to 'Chalk and Talk' method. This method too results in inequity.

Assessment

Our education system's dependence on summative assessment is one of the reasons behind inequity in our classrooms.

■ **Which among these sources are the typically unresolved challenges for teachers in the classroom?**

I would say, *poor infrastructure* or *inappropriate infrastructure*, lack of or *insufficient teacher training*, *limited resources* (time and teaching-learning material), *emphasis on summative assessment* are some of the unresolved challenges for the teachers in classrooms.

I would also like to add, classroom sizes as one of the challenges faced by teachers. Often, a *large number of children in a class* makes it difficult for teachers to ensure addressing individual learning needs and interests. In some settings, *implicit curriculum* is an unresolved challenge.

In **Christy Leigh Stewart's** words, *"You can't fix what you don't know is broken..."*

■ **You work with PATHSHALA, where you run a very successful PBL programme, with groups of varied learners mainly from the underserved strata of society. Please share your experience about the composition of your PBL groups and how you achieve EQUITY.**

We introduced Project Based Learning (PBL) at Pathshala in the year 2021. To give our readers some background, our school is located in a rural setting and we provide services to children from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Characteristics of project-based learning facilitate equity; real-word project topics, hands on and reflective practices, facilitating critical and analytical thinking, creating collaborative learning environment, promoting problem solving and formative assessment to list a few. Thus, the *pedagogy itself has played a vital role in ensuring equity* at Pathshala.

DRAWINGS, ESSAYS, CLAY MODELS ON FARMING TO SEE OUR CHILDREN'S INITIAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE TOPIC AND ALSO TRACK THE PROGRESS THEY MAKE THROUGH THE DIFFERENT PHASES OF LEARNING.

Besides the pedagogy, I would say there are few other key factors that have made it possible for me to facilitate equity,
• *Ethos* of this trust run school. They uphold inclusivity and cherish diversity.
• A *robust teacher training* programme.
• *Leadership's commitment* to equity; leadership is one of the biggest advocates of equity.
• A very *committed and dedicated team* of teachers.
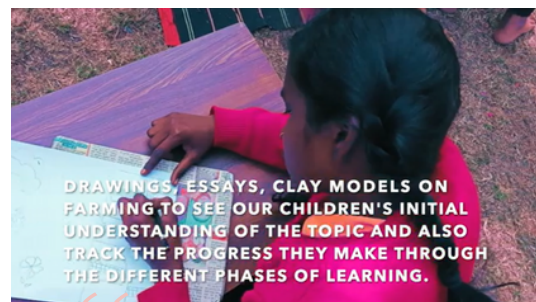
> "
> There are no pedagogical barriers to teaching and learning when willing people are prepared and made available to children.
> *- Asa G. Hilliard*

At *Pathshala*, we do not follow conventional teaching model. Children are **divided into levels**; these levels have a mixed age group. The groups are created *based on their current academic skills.* However, for PBL we group children closer to their chronological age. The reason being, social-emotional development. Thus, in a PBL group children have diverse academic abilities. This diversity is at the centre while planning exploration topics and experiences. *Loris Malaguzzi's 100 languages,* is upheld by our team of teachers. We ensure a wide variety of experiences both inside and outside our classrooms. Children are given opportunities to express their understanding and learning through a wide variety of experiences; drawing, clay work, performing arts, technology, written work. Independent work and group work are carefully curated and we also encourage peer tutoring.

Project *topics are decided upon by teachers and children together.* We often plan project work keeping in mind children's background. For example, we have many children belonging to peasant and tribal communities. In the past, we have explored projects such as, *What is organic farming?* and *What is a tribe*? Often topics are suggested by children - we explored *food* as a project topic and this was solely a topic suggested by children. Similarly, our next topic is '*What is a rock?*' again, a suggestion from a very sassy student, Radhika!

In a nutshell, our strong belief that **every child has something valuable to offer** and our constant reflection on how well have we **created an environment of belongingness** are the two reasons behind *equity in classrooms* at Pathshala.

■ **It is believed that educators need to address 'equity' through work on the self, the classroom, the school, society and working with each other. How can teachers 'already in the circuit' get access now to training for EQUITY in their practice?**

One of my favourite quotes by Mahatma Gandhi ji is, *"Be the change you wish to see."* So, yes educators not only are the **advocates of equity in education** but are the **change agents**. There are many different ways educators can access and/or strengthen their existing training : Azim Premji University offers a PG Diploma in Inclusive Education. In Vadodara, Consortium for Inclusive Education offers a fellowship programme in Equitable Education. There are individual teacher trainers and organisations that provide teacher training workshops on how to achieve equitable education in classrooms.

■ **How can teachers ensure EQUITY especially when students face 'standardised' - MML (Minimum Levels of Learning), TLM, learning experiences, and assessments?**

Establishing equity especially when one has to deal with MML and TLM requires a multifaceted approach. Here are some of the ideas for teachers to consider:

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READ TO SUCCEED

FOR TEACHERS

Equity in Education : *Levelling the playing field of learning - a practical guide for teachers*

- by Lee Elliot Major & Emily Briant

This guide sets out a new equity-based approach in education to help teachers improve the prospects of under-resourced and working-class pupils. The equity approach recognises that we must address our own cultural biases and barriers within the classroom, while helping to remove extra barriers to learning experienced by children outside schools. Based on thousands of research studies and years of working with expert teachers, the book sets out the principles and practical strategies for trainee teachers, teachers and teacher leaders.

FOR STUDENTS

Is Everyone Really Equal? : *An Introduction to Key Concepts in Social Justice Education*

- by Ozlem Sensoy, Robin DiAngelo

Accessible to *students from high school through graduate school*, this book introduces readers to social justice education, providing tools for developing "critical social justice literacy" and for taking action towards a more 'just' society. It offers a collection of detailed and engaging explanations of key concepts in social justice education, including critical thinking, socialization, group identity, prejudice, discrimination, oppression, power, privilege, and White supremacy.

- Create a *classroom environment of belongingness*. Have an in -depth understanding of not only the child but her family 's socio-economic and cultural background.
- *Use of assistive technology*. With the use of special education apps teachers can facilitate learning for children with disabilities.
- *Accommodations in teaching strategies and assessments.* We know each child is unique and has a unique learning style. By keeping in mind, a child's needs and making necessary accommodations to lesson delivery and assessment a teacher can ensure equity in her class. For example,
- Providing *reading material in advance*, allowing a child to record a lesson,
- adapting augmentative and alternative communication system, using technology etc.
- *Providing multiple ways of expressions*. For example, if a child has difficulty with written work, she can be allowed to prepare a presentation with the same criteria instead of a three hours exam.
- Providing *accommodations or modifications as per individual needs*. It is not necessary that all children with disability will require modifications. Often with accommodations in TLM, and physical environment one can ensure participation.
- Enhancing *teachers' own understanding on diversity, inclusion and equitable education* through teacher training programmes.
- Working in *partnership with all stakeholders;* pupils, families, community leaders, advocates, medical fraternity etc.

◼ *Your Final Word ....*

Equity in education is a *global challenge*. Inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all (The Global Goals 4) is a goal the world is striving towards.

In our country we have the necessary *policies and frameworks to facilitate equity in education*. I know it is easier said than done but perseverance pays off. *Every child deserves someone who believes in her potential, fights for her rights and enables her to be her own advocate*. *You are that person! ****

ADDENDUM : When it comes to teaching, we must *provide all students with the opportunity to learn in an equitable environment*. Each student must have access to the same quality of education, regardless of race, socio-economic status, identity, or background. We need to set all students up to learn & thrive in classrooms, based on their individual needs.

To *promote EQUITY in the classroom,* as an educator you must:

1. ....recognize that all students have different needs
2. ....pay attention to your mindset and be aware of any biases you may have
3. ....create a community of trust where students from all backgrounds and identities feel safe to speak up
4. ....promote diversity in your curriculum, not just literature or social studies classes, but science and math too
5. ....use visuals to promote diversity in the classroom
6. ....utilize student voice in curriculum planning and use different perspectives
7. ....have diverse materials in the classroom & diverse books on your shelves
8. ....reach Multilingual Learners
9. ....reach out and get help if you need it

Teachers need to have a *mindset that promotes equity* to teach students equitably. When we teach and learn from a perspective of equity, everyone benefits. Students feel seen and heard, and they are more likely to succeed both academically and socially. ****

PERSONALISED LEARNING

From the moment of birth till about age 3, children receive the most individualised attention by parents, caregivers, daycare attendants, home-helps and others. For everything they expereince and need to learn to be independent, they get *personalised attention* and *training* - be it flipping onto one's side at 3 months, to using one's fingers, to developing the pincer grip, to speaking, eating, walking, writing, ...

And then at 3 yrs, they start attending kindergarten school or the KG of a large school, where they become *one of many kids* in a class. Suddenly the magical comfort-giving *individualised attention* goes *POOF* ! Kids become a roll number, in large-sized classes and are treated *equally,* with an education programme that resembles *one size fits all!*

As educators, we all recognise the fact that *no two students are exactly alike*. That is a good reason why the *personalised learning approach* that the child received till age 3, **must be continued** through the student's journey at least upto the high-school years.

Personalized Learning or PL is an educational approach that aims to *customize learning for each student's strengths, needs, skills, and interests.* Each student gets a *learning plan that's based on what s/he knows and how s/he learns best.* It builds a *learning experience that addresses the unique abilities of each student and enables him/her to choose their own learning paths,* with their *own learning styles*, thereby engaging them in a new and exciting way.

The *4 prominent learning styles* we see are : *Visual, Auditory, Literary (Read/Write),* and *Kinaesthetic.*

Key elements of PL include : Student agency, Flexible learning environments, Targeted instruction for Individual mastery, Learner profiles with Personal learning paths, Data-driven decisions, Student reflection and ownership of learning.

> " Personalized learning, when done correctly, can finally give unconventional students ownership of their own education.
> *- Cary Kelly*

Here are some easy to use PL strategies that you can try:

- **Use ed tech** : PL is a better option *than ever before* because of technology. Keeping track of the unique educational paths of many students is impossible for a teacher in the manual world. Ed tech helps to dynamically track and manage the learning experiences of all the students.
- **Give students many ways to show their knowledge :** In the context of Personalized learning,students may also may prefer to display their knowledge in their own way - some prefer tests & exams, while others may prefer essays, projects, oral presentations, videos, experiments, artworks, educational games, etc.
- **Use flexible seating arrangements :** The traditional, rigid, row arrangement of desks is boring. Students on a personalized learning track will also prefer to be physically embodied in their own way, which means they will need flexible seating arrangements. For ideas visit : *https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/ClassroomSeatingArrangements*
- **Flip lecture and work :** Traditionally, students listen to a lecture at school and complete assignments at home. Modern technology allows us to flip this arrangement. Students can watch the lecture at home on their computer, and complete assignments at school. Another flip strategy is to *allow Students to teach*!
- **Use personalized learning playlists** : A learning "playlist" is a *set of learning activities related to a particular topic.* Students can *choose the activities they want to pursue and complete them at their own pace*. By assigning points to each activity, students can prove their work by achieving a minimum number of points.
- **Add 'choice' in the format of educational content** : Some students prefer *visual learning*. Others prefer *auditory* learning and some *hands-on*. Give students the choice between reading a text, listening to it, or watching a video.
- **Form lessons from students' own experiences** : Students of any age or background bring a wealth of experiences to the table. Students who can relate the material to their own lives will be more motivated to learn about it. Also, sharing and discussing personal life experiences helps to strengthen students' social skills. ***
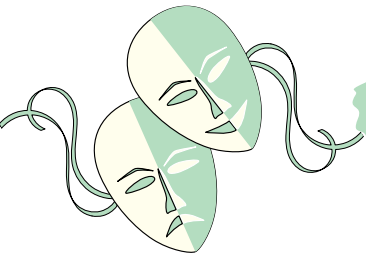
Theatre Integration

SHREE CHANDULAL NANAVATI VINAYMANDIR
Vile Parle (W), Mumbai

INTEGRATION & ASSESSMENT

Schools revamping lesson plans to make them more engaging, participative & tuned in with the multiple intelligences among learners & competency based education.

In this last quarter of the academic year 2023-24, Team QEDRAK brought in **Theatre Integration** to two progressive schools in Mumbai:
- Shree Chandulal Nanavati School
- Jasudben ML School

with renowned performer, playwright, dramaturg & educator - **Ms Nisha Abdulla**, of *Qabila, Offstream and @EverAfter* fame.

An **AI Integration** workshop was held for Grades 6-12 teachers at JML School. **Mr Dhruv Ramaiyah** - STEM educator, NITI AYOG Mentor of Change, founder *MySkillShala* empowered the educators on the power of AI in education.

Team QEDRAK also covered 2 sessions at JML School on - *"Assessments - Basics & Competency-based Makeover"* with Grades 6 to 12, with real-life resources & subject integration for setting competency based assessment papers. *"Thematic Unit Planning"* was covered for teachers of Grades 1-5.

JASUDBEN ML SCHOOL
Khar (W), Mumbai

JASUDBEN ML SCHOOL

AI Integration

Assessment Makeover

QEDRAK courses *are available in* Online *(2-3 hr sessions),* Offline *(half day/full day),* Hybrid *(synchronous, asynchronous & offline) modes.* Schools can opt for - Annual Training *plans /* Half yearly *plans (incl. teacher training + students & parents workshops),* School Consultancy.

The QEDpress COMPENDIUM [Vol.1]

VOLUME 1 | 14. 09. 2023

COMPENDIUM

"The best practices in education are meaningful if they are shared within the education community. Shared Education then becomes a key word. The building of strong, supportive and interdependent connections between schools and other educational settings through Shared Education enables children and young people, teachers and practitioners, and families and communities to develop long lasting relationships and friendships, helping to improve relations and reconciliation outcomes between communities. This compendium of precious insights, opinions, articles, classroom strategies, humour, book titles in education, and more... is aimed at bringing together those in education to do just that!"

A compendium of articles and insights from 12 issues of 2022-23 QEDpress Newsletter issues, brought to you by QEDRAK!

RESOURCES AND KNOWLEDGEWARE
Quintessential Educational Resource and Knowledge

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RESOURCES AND KNOWLEDGEWARE

Team QEDRAK takes pride and pleasure to launch *QEDpress Compendium Vol. 1;* a collection of articles and insights from *12 thematic issues of 2022-23 QEDpress Newsletters,* brought to you by *QEDRAK Publications*! The *compendium* is rich with informative and relevant interviews, articles, classroom strategies, books to read, humour, training details, new terms to know & more... categorised for your easy look-up and reading pleasure! **A MUST HAVE**!
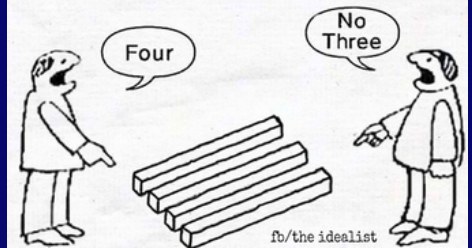
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