

## Enhancing Experiential Education in Teacher Education Classes Through Simulated Person Methodology

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**Abstract :** This study is a narrative inquiry into the use of simulated person methodology (SPM) in teacher education classes. This methodology -often used in medical schools- has tremendous benefits in terms of enhancing experiential education in teacher education classes. Literacy education is a major focus in elementary schools. New teachers must work with parents to ensure that children learn to read and expand their literacy horizons. The classes used in this narrative inquiry research consist of one graduate class on family literacy and two pre-service teacher education classes: literacy and culture and early and family literacy. Two scenarios were devised, both of which simulated a parent-teacher interview. In the first scenario, the parent is a reluctant father who is ashamed of his lack of reading ability and does not understand why literacy is important. His seven-year-old son, wanting to emulate his father, has suddenly transformed from an eager student to one who rejects the value of reading in loyalty to his father who cannot read. In the second scenario, a father is called in by the teacher because his son has started acting out in class. The mother in this scenario is temporarily absent from the home, and the father is now the sole caregiver. In each of the scenarios, students are the teachers who are problem-solving these dilemmas in a safe environment with the 'parent' who is a specially trained simulated person. Teacher candidates enact, with the trained simulated person, their strategies for encouraging parents to engage in the literacy development of their children. Teacher candidates attempt to offer support and encouragement to parents. This simulation strategy offers both beginning and more experienced teachers the opportunity to practice an interview with two distinct and contrasting family situations with regard to the literacy of young children. The paper discusses the details of the scenarios enacted in class and the reflective discussion through which students learn from the simulation.

**Keywords :** experiential education, literacy, simulated person methodology, teacher education

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