Costumes and Comical Skits: An Innovative Teaching Technique for Extension Educators and Audiences

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Introduction Before Extension information can be useful to an audience, it must be relevant. While relevancy can be difficult to gauge, new information presented in an interesting way gains greater attention and helps ensure retention. One interesting way of presenting new information is through the use of innovative educational skits. Information conveyed in this way is more likely to be remembered if both Extension educators and participants mutually engage in presenting it. This collaborative teamwork approach to teaching increases the likelihood that information is remembered and applied while encouraging interdisciplinary and cross-cultural interaction.

Purpose of the Poster The purpose of the poster will be to share the results of an innovative teaching technique developed for a large classroom setting and suggest its application to international Extension programming efforts. WII-FM, known as What’s In It-For Me, was an interest approach successfully used with university students of varied cultural backgrounds to enhance the relevance of course material to student lives and career paths. Instead of the educator reviewing past material, students worked in groups of four or five to design and conduct short skits at the beginning of each class. During the skits, termed WII-FM broadcasts, students wore costumes, played music, held up colorful signs, and even danced while audience members evaluated their creativity and ability to gain attention and interest. Similar educational skits may increase participant interaction and cognitive retention if used in international Extension programs.

Major Points of Information to be Shared The poster will describe the reactions of students to their participation in the WII-FM broadcasts in terms of educational value and ability to make course material more relevant. In addition, it will show the relevance of this and other interest approaches to making information presented during Extension programs more engaging and relevant to diverse audiences. Although group discussions can be helpful, group presentations may make Extension programs more memorable.

Conclusions and Educational Importance This type of teaching technique can be useful for Extension educators hoping to increase audience engagement while ensuring that information will be retained and applied. As one example from this study, Extension participants provided with written material during a program could work in teams to present components of lengthy handouts using simple (and fun) props provided by facilitators. Participants presenting such information will take more ownership of the content and be more likely to remember the information they present. Audience members will be more likely to reread and apply the information presented to their own lives.