

# **Standardization of Training Modules on Mushroom Cultivation Technology**

**Mahantesh Shirur<sup>1</sup>, Anupam Barh<sup>2</sup> and Sudheer Kumar Annepu<sup>3</sup>**

## **Abstract**

*The training programmes on mushroom cultivation technology in India are unidentical with a vague curriculum framework. This has overarching implications for the quality of training programmes on mushroom cultivation and subsequently on the mushroom enterprises in the country. The present study was undertaken to address this concern and standardize the curriculum framework and training modules on mushroom cultivation aspects. Eight training modules based on learning needs and training feedback of different stakeholders have been proposed. The curriculum development for all these training modules was done on the basis of relevancy analysis. The standardised training modules will serve as the quality benchmark for transactions in the learning environment. The proposed training modules will also serve for institutional policy formulation for training programmes on mushroom cultivation.*

**Keywords:** Training needs, capacity building, learning, curriculum framework, mushroom.

## **Introduction**

Mushroom enterprise is still treated as an ancillary agri-business activity in India Shirur, Shivalingegowda, Chandregowda & Rajkumar, (2015). Favorable and diverse climate, adequate land, surplus labor and plenty of agriculture residues serve as the ideal recipe to enhance mushroom production to meet the growing demand for protein rich food. However, the production and utilization of mushrooms as a regular food in India is far less compared to many of the neighboring Southeast Asian nations (Shirur, Shivalingegowda, & Chandregowda (2017). However, of late, the edible mushrooms in India are enticing

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<sup>1</sup> Deputy Director, National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), Hyderabad, Telangana. Corresponding author Email: maha.shirur@manage.gov.in

<sup>2&3</sup>Scientists, ICAR-Directorate of Mushroom Research, Chambaghat, Solan, Himachal Pradesh

Received Date: 23-12-2019

Accepted Date: 03-01-2020

the hi-tech vegetable growers and agri-entrepreneurs to venture into mushroom farming as they are getting a premium price (Shirur, Shivalingegowda & Younus, 2013). Despite many mushrooms available for commercial cultivation, the mushroom industry in India is overwhelmingly focused on white button mushroom which is a capital-intensive activity (Sharma, Annepu, Gautam, Singh, & Kamal, 2017). Besides, the lack of technical skills, low level of information supply both on production and marketing aspects are the major impairments that have constrained the spread of mushroom industry in India (Shirur, Shivalingegowda, Chandregowda & Rana, 2016). These reasons are creating an increasing need of quality training among the farmers and entrepreneurs willing to take up mushroom cultivation as an agri-business activity.

The training programmes on mushroom cultivation technology are in huge demand. Being a nodal research and training institute of India, ICAR-Directorate of Mushroom Research at Solan is receiving more applications for training than each previous year (Shirur, Annepu, Awasthi & Thakur, 2017). Even with the network of 32 centres of All India Coordinated Research Project (AICRP) on mushroom, 665 Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) / Farm Science Centres, several research institutes and State departments, the farmers and entrepreneurs willing to get trained on mushroom cultivation are not being adequately trained largely due to the huge number of applicants. Along with technical competency, the training centres are expected to possess the necessary infrastructure to impart proper training on mushroom cultivation. In the absence of technical expertise and infrastructure, several training centres and private consultants offer short term trainings of one to two days focusing on one or two edible mushrooms. This has led to unscientific and unsustainable adoption of mushroom cultivation by many farmers and entrepreneurs eventually resulting in financial loss for them.

Knowledge on any entrepreneurial venture forms an important basis for making wise decisions in an enterprise. The knowledge of mushroom entrepreneurship is still more critical considering the technical skills involved in mushroom cultivation associated jobs like; spawn production, compost preparation, environment management to suit to different mushroom varieties, pest and disease control, marketing management, processing of mushrooms, etc. (Shirur et al. 2015). While dealing with such broad subjects, training need identification and curriculum prioritisation is prerequisite to ensure the quality of training programmes (Sharma, Arora & Kher, 2010). Lynton and Pareek (1990) also

emphasised the role of training need identification in the success of training programmes. Hence, the present study was envisaged with the following objectives.

- i. To identify training and curriculum needs of mushroom growing farmers and entrepreneurs.
- ii. To standardise the training modules and prescribe relevant curriculum framework to ensure effectiveness in trainings on mushroom farming.

## **Material and Methods**

The research study was conducted at the ICAR-Directorate of Mushroom Research, Solan, India. The erstwhile training modules on mushroom cultivation were analyzed for efficiency for two years from 2016-17. The respondents were selected from participants attending the training modules for farmers, entrepreneurs and officials. The data on post training evaluation and feedback was collected from trainees through a structured and pretested questionnaire from 100 entrepreneurs, 120 farmers and 30 officers/scientists and subject matter specialists from State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs).

Based on the evaluation results of earlier training modules, eight new training modules were proposed with need based relevant course curriculum. The methodology followed for proposing the new training modules on mushroom cultivation and relevant curriculum was based on ADDIE model. The Analysis (A), Design (D), Development (D) and Implementation (I) stages completed in the first stage of module development have been presented here.

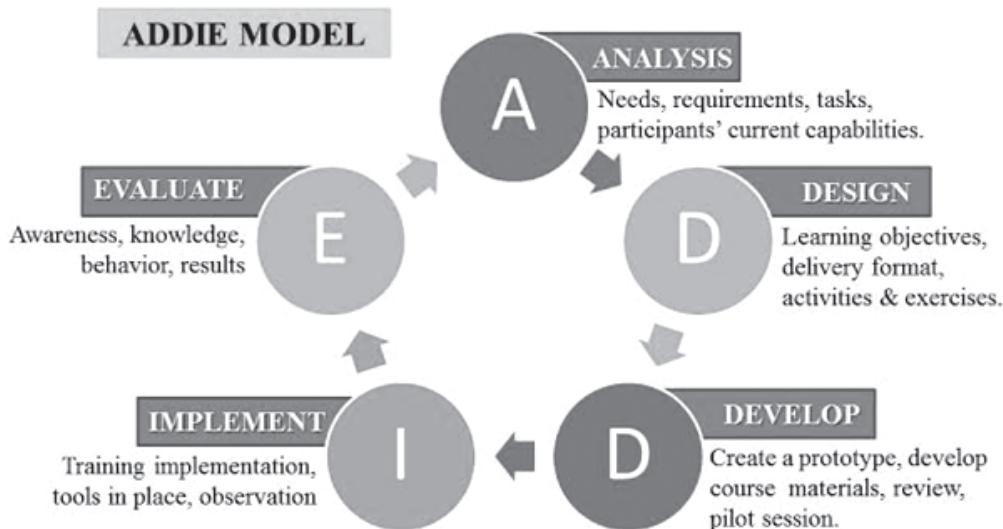
The descriptive statistical methods mean and frequency have been used for data analysis and interpretation.

## **Results and Discussions**

### ***Module Development***

Training modules identification and curriculum framework were developed by following five stages as followed in ADDIE model (Wang & Hsu, 2009). ADDIE model is one of

the old but effective models developed for the U.S. Army during the 1970s by Florida State University's Center for Educational Technology (Fig.1) (Branson et al., 1975).



**Fig.1 ADDIE Model used for Development and Standardisation of Training Modules**

- i) **Analysis:** The analysis principally allows a teacher to gather information about the knowledge, skills, or attitudes the learner needs to attain and what needs to be taught to accomplish this learning (Cheung, 2016). The mushroom cultivation training modules conducted by ICAR-Directorate of Mushroom Research, Solan and its curriculum was taken as the content for analysis. These training modules of 10 days for entrepreneurs and 7 days for farmers and officials were analysed.

The new training modules were proposed based on need analysis, audience analysis and task analysis. Need analysis was done by trainees' feedback about lectures, lecture-organization, facilities, etc. Audience analysis was done on the basis of profession (Farmers, entrepreneurs, officials), money invested for training and type of exposure, mushroom variety and type of mushroom farming interested in, duration of training, methods of teaching, instructional aids used and literature support required. Task analysis was done by creation and development of different modules according to the perceived need and audience analysis output. This data was used as the basis for curriculum identification for different training modules. In the open ended responses, one major perceived barrier to learning

by the farmers and entrepreneurs was asked. Seventy eight learning barriers mentioned by these respondents were pooled under 11 headings. Frequency and arithmetic mean were used to present the evaluation results.

The results showed that 30.77 per cent of the trainees urged to include additional practical sessions and 19.23 per cent trainees were in favour of fewer participants in each batch. About 16.67 per cent of the trainees found the sessions highly scientific/ technical and difficult to comprehend while 8.97 per cent participants perceived that the duration of the training was more than required. Of all the responses, language barrier, improper organisation of lectures and outdated lectures were mentioned as barriers to effective learning by 5.13 per cent of the trainees. Among other barriers poor presentation skills of trainers, lesser number of introductory lectures, infrastructure and logistical support and dealing with too many mushroom species in a single training were listed by the respondents (Table 1).

**Table 1. Barriers to Learning Expressed by Trainees N=220**

Learning barrier	Percentage of responses
Inadequate number of practical sessions	30.77
Too many participants in the batch	19.23
Too Scientific/ technical jargons	16.67
Duration of training too lengthy	8.97
Unsuitable medium of instruction	5.13
Improper organization of lectures	5.13
Outdated lectures	5.13
Poor presentation skills	3.85
Insufficient introductory lectures	2.56
Infrastructure and logistical shortcoming	1.28
Too many mushroom varieties	1.28

**ii) Design:** Design is a blueprint for the training module. After the analysis of previous modules, new training modules were designed. Besides the above criteria of training analysis, institutional requirements were considered in proposing new training modules. The proposed training modules were designed to overcome the shortcomings in the existing training modules. These training modules covered the topics with varying emphasis on different aspects of mushroom cultivation.

Eight new training modules designed are presented in Table 2. MCT-ABE and MCT-SFY/MCT-GFY modules were designed to cater to the needs of entrepreneurs with huge investment capacity and farmers with low investment capacity respectively. The former module deals with bigger projects of different edible mushrooms while the emphasis in the latter module is on smaller projects on mushroom cultivation for livelihood purpose with less capital investment. MCT-GFY is the module similar to MCT-SFY but organised for targeted beneficiaries identified by the Government institutions.

Based on the demand for training on button mushrooms alone by many trainees, BMCT-ABE module was conceived and designed focusing exclusively on cultivation aspects of button mushrooms. The MCT-VDO training module was designed for trainees with basic understanding of biological science covering prime edible mushrooms. It is premised that they can comprehend the mushroom cultivation aspects simply by seeing the steps through video documentaries. In this module, video documentaries will be supplemented with discussion with the experts to answer the queries if any.

HOST-SPT and HOST-PHT modules were designed to address the concerns expressed by trainees on additional practical sessions for skill enhancement. To address the language barrier, the training modules can be organised in different languages by segregating the trainees into homogeneous groups.

Experts and trainers involved in mushroom training lack necessary expertise to deal with diverse topics such as farm design, regulation of cropping room conditions, pest and disease management, spawn production, processing and value addition in mushrooms, etc (Shirur et al., 2016). Hence, the MCT-GOV module has been exclusively designed to address the capacity building on mushroom production aspects for scientists and Subject Matter Specialists (SMS) of KVKs and line departments.

**Table 2. New Training Modules Proposed on Mushroom Cultivation Technology**

<b>Modules</b>	<b>MCT-ABE</b>	<b>MCTSFY</b>	<b>BMCT-ABE</b>	<b>MCT-VDO</b>	<b>HOST-SPT</b>	<b>HOST-PHT</b>	<b>MCT-GOV</b>	<b>MCT-GFY</b>
<b>Course title</b>	Mushroom cultivation technology as an agri - business enterprise	Mushroom cultivation technology for small farmers and youth	Button mushroom production technology as an agri-business enterprise	Mushroom cultivation technology through video documentaries	Hands on skill training on spawn production technology	Hands on skill training on value addition and post harvest technology	Mushroom cultivation technology for scientists and Government officials	Mushroom cultivation technology under government schemes for small farmers and youth
<b>Objective</b>	To help industrialists and entrepreneurs establish large scale commercial mushroom units.	To help small farmers and youth to establish small and medium mushroom production units for livelihood.	To help industrialists and entrepreneurs establish large scale commercial button mushroom production units.	To help industrialists and entrepreneurs understand the basics of commercial mushroom production units.	To help the entrepreneurs to establish a mushroom spawn production facility	To help the entrepreneurs to establish a mushroom processing unit to prepare mushroom value added products.	To help the officers and trainers to become master trainers on mushroom cultivation technology.	To help small farmers and youth to establish small and medium mushroom production units for livelihood.
<b>Method of instruction and teaching tools used</b>	Theory/ lecture with power point presentations supplemented with demonstrations and visits to large commercial units.	Theory/ lecture with power point presentations supplemented with demonstrations and farmers' field visits	Theory/ lecture with power point presentations followed by discussion with experts and farm visits.	Video documentaries followed by discussion with experts and farm visits.	Hands on practice to learn skills of spawn production in spawn laboratory.	Videos and Hands on practice to learn skills of mushroom preservation and processing	Theory/ lecture with power point presentations supplemented with demonstrations and field visits.	Same as module 2

Modules	MCT-ABE	MCT-SFY	BMCT-ABE	MCT-VDO	HOST-SPT	HOST-PHT	MCT-GOV	MCT-GFY
<b>Literature or training material to cover the curriculum to be provided</b>	Printed literature covering the curriculum	Printed literature covering the curriculum	Printed literature covering the curriculum and technology documentaries	Technology documentary on spawn production and literature on spawn production technology	Video documentary on post harvest technology and value addition in mushrooms and literature on mushroom recipes	Printed literature covering the curriculum and technology documentaries	Printed literature covering the curriculum and technology documentaries	Printed literature covering the curriculum
<b>Number of candidates/batch</b>	40-50	40-50	50-60	50-100	5-10	5-10	20-30	20-50
<b>Duration in days</b>	7	5	3	3	3	3	5-7	3-4

MCT-ABE: Mushroom Cultivation Technology for Agri-Business Entrepreneurs

MCT-SFY: Mushroom Cultivation Technology for Small Farmers and Youth

BMCT-ABE: Button Mushroom Cultivation Technology for Agri-Business Entrepreneurs

MCT-VDO: Mushroom Cultivation Technology through Video Documentaries assisted learning.

HOST-SPT: Hands on Skill Training on Spawn production Technology

HOST-PHT: Hands on Skill Training on Post harvest technology and processing

MCT-GOV: Mushroom Cultivation Technology for Government Officials.

MCT-GFY: Mushroom Cultivation Technology for Farmers and Youth sponsored by Government schemes.

**Table 3. Curriculum Framework Proposed for Different Training Modules on Mushroom Cultivation Technology**

Sl. No	Topic	MCT-FABE	MCT-SFY/ CFY	BMCT-ABE	MCT-VDO	HOST-SPT	HOST-PHT	MCT-GOV
1	An introduction to mushrooms, principles and practices of their cultivation	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
2	An exposure visit to farm facilities and cropping rooms	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
3	Mushroom - An agri business activity	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
4	Nutritional and medicinal values of mushrooms	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗
5	Mushroom culture preparation and preservation techniques	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Spawn production technology	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Quality traits in mushroom strains and acceptability	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	Methods of compost production technologies for white button mushrooms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
9	Crop management of white button mushroom	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Farm design, infrastructure requirement for commercial mushroom growing unit	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
11	Economics of button mushroom cultivation on a small scale	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
12	Economics of button mushroom cultivation on industrial scale	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
13	Cultivation & economics of paddy straw mushroom	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
14	Cultivation of oyster mushroom	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
15	Infrastructure, economics of oyster mushroom	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓

**Table 3. Curriculum Framework Proposed for Different Training Modules on Mushroom Cultivation Technology**

Sl. No	Topic	MCT-TABE	MCT-SFY/ GFY	BMCT-TABE	MCT-FYDO	HOST-SPT	HOST-PHT	MCT-GOV
16	Cultivation & economics of milky mushroom	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
17	Competitor moulds/fungal and viral diseases	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
18	Bacterial diseases and abiotic disorders of mushrooms	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
19	Insect, pests & nematodes of mushroom crop and their management	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
20	Cultivation of shiitake mushroom	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
21	Production & marketing: Global and national scenario	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
22	Financial assistance available for mushroom production and project formulation	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
23	Round the year cultivation of mushrooms	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
24	Quality parameters and analysis of compost and casing soil	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
25	Cultivation of specialty mushrooms	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
26	Post harvest handling, value-addition, processing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
27	Computer use and application in mushroom enterprises	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
28	Recycling of spent mushroom substrate	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
29	Sources of information for various inputs	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
30	Entrepreneurial attributes to succeed in mushroom entrepreneurship	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

**iii) Develop :** In the development stage, exhaustive curriculum topics were listed from a comprehensive review of literature. Since the training needs on mushroom farming are largely dependent on the type of mushroom variety, nature of farming, investment capacity, raw materials and labour wages, input costs, etc., these topics were given for trainees for relevancy analysis based on their perceived needs. For relevancy weightage (RW), responses were recorded on five point continuum from 1-5 with 1 being the not relevant (NR) and 5 as the most relevant (MR). Relevant (R), Some what Relevant (SR) and Least Relevant (LR) were assigned 4, 3 and 2 weightages respectively.

$$RW = \frac{MR \times 5 + R \times 4 + SR \times 3 + LR \times 2 + NR \times 1}{\text{Maximum possible scores} \times \text{No of respondents}}$$

Topics with relevancy weightage value of more than 0.80 were included in the training module and the decision on left out aspects was made in consultation with subject matter specialists. The training curriculum finalised for each module is given in Table 3.

Although the curriculum of MCT-ABE and MCT-SFY/MCT-GFY modules dealt with crop production, management and processing activities, the MCT-ABE module put more emphasis on the need based detailed financial and economic principles involved in mushroom cultivation and entrepreneurial attributes to succeed in large scale mushroom enterprises. The curriculum of MCT-SFY and MCT-GFY modules will focus on teaching to engage in mushroom production activity with less capital inputs using the prevailing seasonal climatic variations. These modules will guide the small and marginal farmers to integrate the mushroom production activity with the existing cropping patterns to generate additional farm income. Further, this is in line with meeting the objectives of Skill India and ARYA (Attracting Rural Youth for Agriculture) schemes of the Government of India.

Despite the post harvest handling problems, white button mushroom has an organized market in India. The preference of the majority of mushroom consumers in favour of this mushroom has led to its buoyant demand in the domestic market. This is the reason for mushroom growers' demand for exclusive training on button mushroom alone. The button mushroom crop differs from other tropical mushrooms in respect of its requirement of

composted substrate for its growth and the temperate conditions in the cropping room. Considering these perceived needs of the trainees, the curriculum of the BMCT-ABE module has been finalised.

Both HOST-SPT and HOST-PHT modules are primarily intended to create skilled manpower who can become entrepreneurs and lead start-ups in mushroom related enterprises. Quality spawn is a critical input to succeed in mushroom entrepreneurship yet many small farmers do not produce the spawn required in their mushroom unit either due to lack of infrastructure or the lack of technical knowledge. Besides turning into entrepreneurs themselves, the participants trained through HOST-SPT module will spiral the mushroom production in the country by supporting the small and marginal farmers. The HOST-PHT module will create employment opportunities of mushroompreneurs through engaging in production of mushroom fortified products and minimising the loss on account of short shelf life of fresh mushrooms.

Recent trends in Agricultural Information Management and several advances in digital technologies have changed the way information is accessed and disseminated. To meet the expectations of the educated mass with access to information and communication tools, MCT-VDO module has been proposed through digital content delivery followed by demonstrations and discussions with experts. The proposed training module is aimed to fulfill the necessity of the new mushroom-preneurs to meet their need of comprehensive information using the digital platforms. The curriculum in the MCT-VDO module is delimited to the cultivation technology of five prime edible mushrooms (*Agaricus bisporus*, *Lentinula edodes*, *Pleurotus sp.*, *Volvariella volvacea* and *Calocybe indica*) in India.

The curriculum for the MCT-GOV is borrowed broadly from the MCT-ABE module as the needs of the officials were overlapping with the demands of entrepreneurs. Moreover, with necessary expertise in large scale projects, the officials and scientists can absorb and translate the learning to direct the small farmers and youth on their needs.

**iv) Implementation:** The implementation stage is the road map as how the learning objectives shall be achieved by the integration of methods of instruction and delivery. The class room instruction supported by multimedia tools will be used to make up for the

temporal activities associated with mushroom cultivation practices. This will facilitate effective learning especially in teaching the distantly timed activities such as spawn preparation, compost stacking, turning, pasteurization, etc. The operation of machines and creation of infrastructure necessary for all activities in mushroom production can be shown through instructional aids and field visits. The implementation stage of new modules is aimed to reduce the slack time and increase the efficiency and intensity of trainings. The slack time is filled by video documentaries, field visits and other innovative teaching modes.

**v) Evaluation:** For the evaluation part, online assessments, structured questionnaire and feedback from discussion with trainees will be undertaken. The learning shall be assessed based on the pre-training and post-training tests to measure the change in the knowledge level. This will be facilitated through a teacher test that comprises questions derived from both theoretical and practical concepts taught during the training programme. To measure the behavior change, combination of results from teacher test, visual observation of trainees' behavior such as discussion, participation in skill practices and the change in opinion about different commercial mushrooms will be recorded. This will be measured by taking the opinion of the instructor of the trainee (Rafiq, 2015). This knowledge change would help to track the extent of effectiveness of training modules both during and after the training programme. The results of the future evaluation will be tested from the extent of adoption of mushroom cultivation either as an agri-business or in associated enterprises such as spawn production, compost supply, mushroom marketing, mushroom processing, spent mushroom substrate utilisation, etc. Ideally, the evaluation stage of the training modules may need two years to test them among a sizeable number of participants from 5-6 batches.

## Conclusion

The new training modules on mushroom cultivation and the relevant curriculum for these modules were designed and developed methodically with an aim to accomplish effective learning. The feedback from the participants was given primacy in arriving at different training modules and accommodating their needs in the training modules. Limited resources, especially the trainers on mushroom cultivation need to be utilised rationally through the

use of digital resources and addressing training needs of larger groups at one go. Implementation guidelines of the training modules will result into quality deliverables through training programmes. The proposed study based on ADDIE model facilitates comprehensive assessment of workability of new training modules. Delineating the curriculum in minute detail will ensure the objectivity in its description. This is an important contribution of the research study that would help to shield the farmers and entrepreneurs from unqualified trainers and unskilled consultants. The proposed training modules will also serve for policy formulation in training programmes on mushroom cultivation adopted by different institutions and agencies in India.

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