Development Research Methods
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Module - 6
Lecture - 19
Communicating Research

Hello and welcome to the NPTEL MOOC's course on development research methods. This is lesson 3 of week 6. And in today's lesson we will study about how to best communicate research results. Whether we are communicating practice-oriented research results or we are communicating academic research-oriented research results, there are certain ways in which evaluation studies have thrown light on how best communication can be established with regard to research results.

Now, understand the fact that, many outside the academia, do not have much time to read the research coming out in academic studies or journal articles. That is not because they are not interested in reading journal articles or academic research, but because the work that they do gets in the way of being able to devote that much time to go through the rigorous details of academic research. Now, as a general rule, the more powerful someone is, the less time they can devote to the details of academic research that one undertakes. And it is under these contexts that one needs to understand, particularly those in the field of academic research need to understand what are the different ways in which significant research results can be communicated.

The very famous development economist Joseph Stiglitz is supposed to have said, there is a lot of information asymmetry as far as governments and the people are concerned, the people that they govern are concerned. And because there is a lot of information asymmetry, in the sense that the policy interventions that are being carried out, or the policy changes that are being initiated, does not reach the people at the right time. Information regarding it does not reach the people at the right time. As a result of which, it becomes almost impossible for them to contribute to the debate that surrounds the policies that are being introduced. And that affects their daily lives. And because of these information asymmetries, it leads to the preservation of unjust and undemocratic regimes. And one of the ways in which democratic reforms can be carried out is, to enable communication of results such that people can participate in the development process by being a part of the debate itself.

Now, having said this, let me also begin by saying that, the world of policy change or policy research is a complex, contested and a highly political one. Many of us who do development research or who practice or are practitioners are in the field of development practice, would know and understand that often we come across and identify, we are able to identify serious problems in the way a policy is being implemented after having evaluated these policies. And therefore, it becomes essential for us to suggest different forms of course corrections as far as these policies are concerned. And for being able to suggest course corrections, communicating the research results is very important.

But the challenges that we often face in the field of development practice is that, there may be powerful stakeholders who are simply not ready to listen to the kind of changes that we are suggesting. So, what does one do in these situations? Because, when such a situation occurs, any amount of skills that you may have developed as part of being able to learn professional communication will not facilitate the adoption of that change. But it is also true that, not being able to communicate results also exist. And that will also further inhibit the process of being able to bring about certain change, policy change. So, the overall point is to say that communication of research results particularly communication of policy-oriented research results is a very important aspect of overall policy research. And there is a lot of judgement and a sense of timing that goes into understanding how well to communicate results.

So, in this backdrop, what I have done in today's lesson is to sort of summarize from various kinds of literature that is doing the rounds of development studies and development practice, with regard to what are the best practices on how best can research results be communicated. So, the way we will go in this lesson is as follows. We will first look at, what do we mean when we are saying communicating findings; the communication and the research process; constraints and political considerations while communicating research; and some tips to communicate research professionally.

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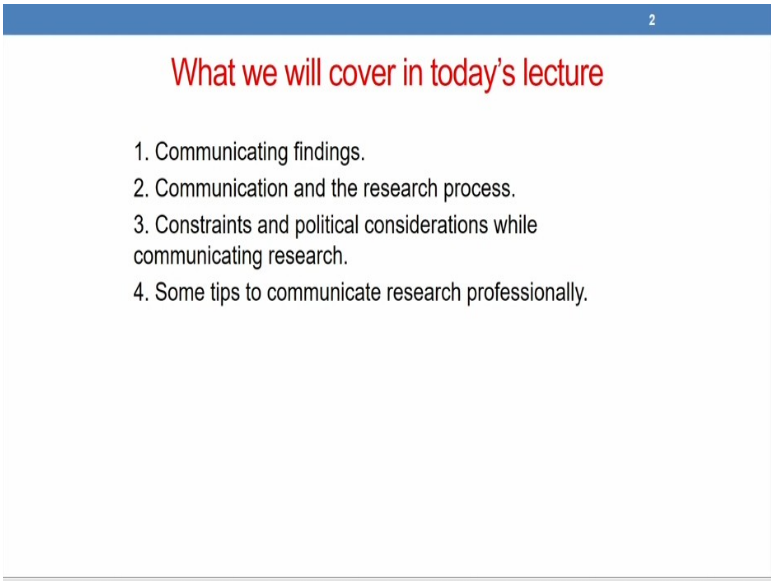

So, basically, I am summarizing this entire discussion on communicating results under these 4 heads. Let us begin with the first, that is on communicating findings.

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Now, with the brief introduction that I just gave on what are the concerns, why communicating results should be taken very seriously, we now know that research is one of the motors of initiating change. The process of research itself means that we are also carrying out some kind of an intervention. This is something that I will discuss in the slides that is coming ahead. But the fact that we are carrying out research itself and particularly policy research means that it is some kind of an intervention. The evaluation process; when we are carrying out some kind of a policy evaluation through development research, we are informing the participants about the policy. And in a way, we are asking the participants to be a part of the discussion that we are initiating as part of research. So, in that sense, research is one of the motors for initiating change. And therefore, communicating results is a delicate and important task. And the communicator of research findings therefore needs to be both politically sensitive and adept. Because, when we are doing policy-oriented research, because it has got a lot to do with the regime that is initiating the policy change or implementing the policy and therefore, it is very important that the communicator of research findings needs to be both politically sensitive and adept.

Further, good communication skills can facilitate the adoption of policy change, research findings and politically appropriate policy recommendations. That is something that needs to be borne in mind. And good communication is particularly important where the research seeks to advocate on behalf of a particular group or cause. We have done as part of our course, we have been introduced to action-oriented research and different kinds of research themes that can be taken up as part of action-oriented research. And you would see that these fall under the broad transformative paradigms where we are suggesting that some kind of a policy change takes place. Change or bringing about transformation is one of the agendas of these research paradigms. And when we are doing things such as this; then it is particularly important that what we are researching needs to be communicated properly. Because, it is in the interest of the group that we are probably representing and are trying to advocate about.

So, communication between researchers and other stakeholders in the project is a 2-way process. It goes back and forth. And also, as we will see next, it is an iterative process. And decisions about the when, what, who and how of communicating results raises questions about power, ethics, accountability and responsibility.

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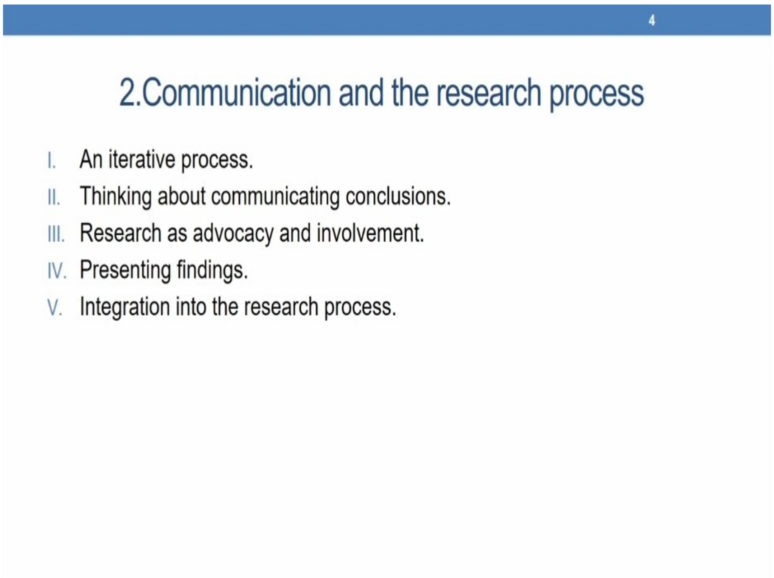

So, what are the different kinds of processes that are a part of communication and the research process? We can think about it is follows. There are, there can be many. However, based upon the literature that I have studied as part of the communicating results part, I would like to summarize them under 5. One is that communication is an iterative process. It is not a one way, it is not a linear process, but it is an iterative process. Thinking about communicating conclusions; research as advocacy and involvement; presenting findings; and integration into the research process. Let us take up each of these one by one.

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What do we mean when we are saying that communication is an iterative process? Now, as I said, good communication of policy related research requires layers of attention. And communicating results is an activity which is often thought of as coming at the end of the project. You define the project, you do the research. And then, you come up with results. And based upon the results, you have a policy proposition. And then, depending upon the political will of the establishment, the policy recommendation may or may not be accepted. However, this is a linear process and a very naive process. And a good communication of policy related research requires layers of iteration.

When research is commissioned, the initial questions often uncover more complex issues. Or through preliminary investigation, it may become apparent that the initial design of the project is lacking; or that a key stakeholder has been overlooked. When we design the research, we often come with a certain hypothesis or a certain research problem. And during the process of research, we may find that many key stakeholders have been left out of the research design, the way it has been proposed; or while carrying out the research, we have not been able to take the opinions of key stakeholders into account. And therefore, it becomes essential to go back to the research design again and come up with alternative designs.

I have taken examples of complimentary feeding practices in the past, in various classes. Suppose, if I have to take an example of how, when we are designing research, we may leave out certain stakeholders. Suppose, we are carrying out some kind of a household survey in a certain community. And we know that the households are the primary unit of investigation for us and we are administering the questionnaires among the households. However, in the process of interaction with the households, we see that, there are various NGOs or civil society organizations who are working along with the households for information dissemination regarding behavioral change within a community. And suppose while in the process of carrying out this research and complimentary food among children who, between the ages of 6 months to 2 years, as I have taken the examples earlier, when we are doing such kinds of studies, if we do not account for the kind of work already that have taken place by these civil society organizations in contributing to the behavioral changes that may have occurred over a period of time. Then we are leaving out a very important stakeholder from our analysis. And although the original research design may not have made any mention about this stakeholder, it makes sense to go back to the research design, alter it and bring them on board as well.

So, therefore, alternative research designs needs to be thought through. And sometimes, the researcher will realize the need to change and will in discussion with other stakeholders be able to make the appropriate alterations. And this process may also lend insight into the explicit and implicit motives behind the commissioning of research.

Secondly, when we are saying research is an iterative process, most often, communicating preliminary results to others will uncover problems which the researcher may have missed and which can then be discussed. So, one of the reasons for integrating communication and presentation to the process of research at an early stage is that design faults can be dealt with. So, we are looking at the research as an iterative process. These are the things that one needs to keep in mind.

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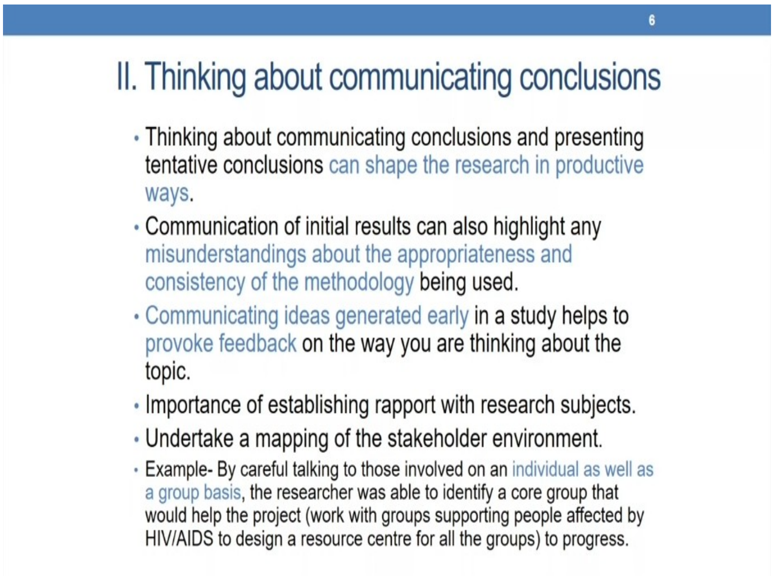

The second is thinking about communicating conclusions. Now, being able to communicate conclusions and presenting tentative conclusions can actually shape the research in very productive ways. And communication of initial results can also highlight any misunderstandings about the appropriateness and consistence of the methodology being used. So, for example, we may have initiated a study, like I took the example of complimentary feeding, the methodology that we are trying to implement with the help of carrying out household surveys. Whereas, in the process of doing the study, we might see that we do not have enough sample to call it a proper household survey. We might want to go to some kind of case research. And these becomes possible when we are interacting with the stakeholders at every stage of the research process. So, communication of initial results can also highlight misunderstandings about the appropriateness and consistency of methodology being used.

Another important point with regard to communicating conclusions is that, if we are communicating ideas generated early on in a study, it helps to provoke feedback on the way we are thinking about the topic. It makes sense to share the conclusions with the participants, with the various stakeholders who are a part of the study design. And then, based upon the feedback that we are receiving from each of these stakeholders, revise or redesign the topic that we had in the first place.

There is an importance of establishing rapport with the research subjects. And we may undertake a mapping of the stakeholder environment. Many scholars for example, have shown that by careful talking to those involved on an individual as well as a group basis in a particular study on HIV AIDS, the researchers on carefully talking to individuals and on a group basis, they were able to identify a core group that would help the project to progress. And that was in the form of working with groups supporting people affected by HIV AIDS to design a resource centre for all the groups. And as I keep saying, these are all part of the transformatory designs, transformatory paradigms of research study.

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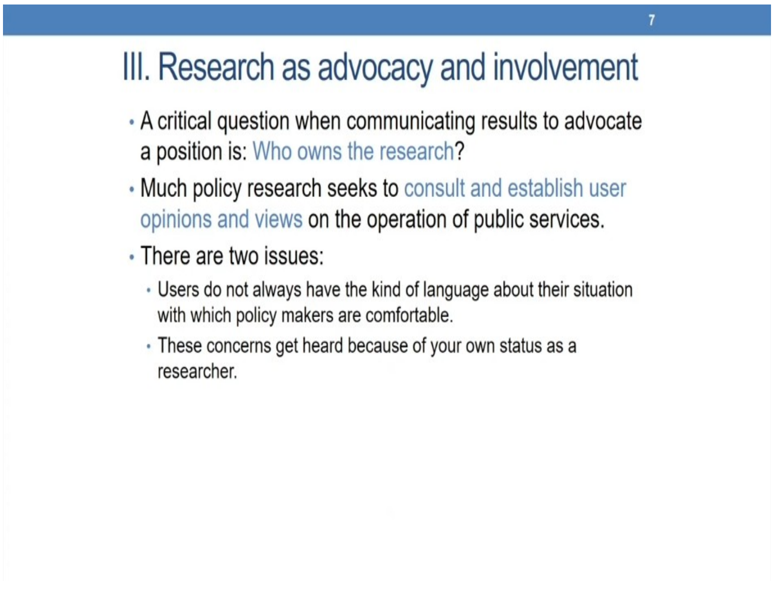

Third is to look at research as advocacy and involvement. Now, the critical question to ask here when communicating results to advocate a position is, who owns the research; who has initiated the research; and who owns the repository of research. And much policy research seeks to consultant and establish user opinions and views on the operation of public services. And here there are 2 issues. Users do not always have the kind of language about their situation with which policymakers are comfortable. And these concerns get heard because of your own status as a researcher. If you are coming from a privileged position of power, often you can make yourself heard, but may not be so. So, therefore, these 2 issues need to be balanced out, so that research can be used as advocacy and involvement.

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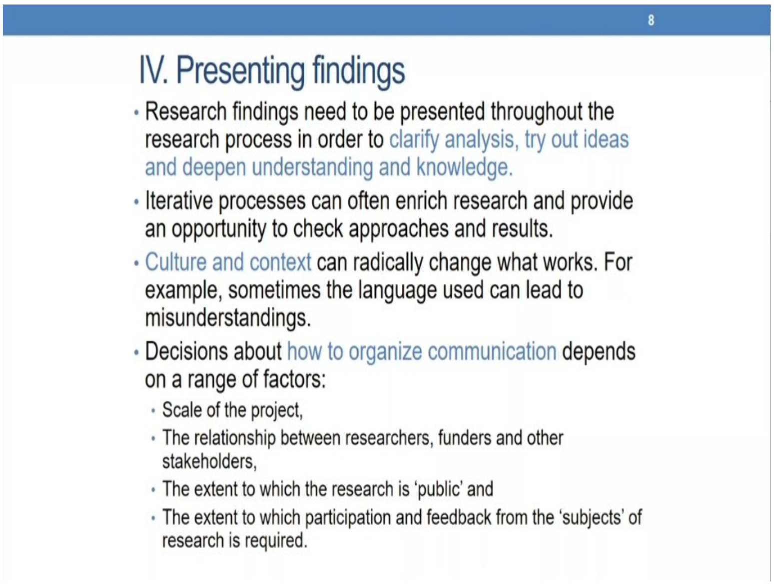

The fourth is presentation of findings. Now, research findings need to be presented throughout the research process, in order to clarify, analysis, try out ideas and deepen understanding and knowledge. And there are a variety of ways this can be done. And decisions about which format to use for meetings; and which tools to use, need to take into account political dynamics and aims of the research. Iterative processes can often enrich research and provide an opportunity to check approaches and results. And there now exist some excellent resources and tool kits to help with planning research communication. But it is also important that you think through exactly what you need to communicate, rather than simply relying on templates created by someone else. With a kind of evolution taking place in information and communication technology; and also different kinds of tools and software that are available for communicating research, we have numerous kinds of templates today, that can be used for, utilized for being able to communicate research well. But it also makes sense to stop and think about what is it that we want to convey through our communication that we are talking about. We will look at some of these in some time.

Now, culture and context are something very important. And that can radically change what works. For example, sometimes the language used can lead to misunderstandings. Particularly, if the research findings are of a technical nature that normally uses a lot of jargon and people who are in the government or the bureaucracy or international organizations, who are otherwise engaged and do not have much time to skim through the kind of technical jargons that we use in academic research, it will not be able to strike a chord with them. And they often do not have time to read more than 2 pages of A4 size paper. And therefore, it makes sense to keep technical jargons to the minimum and put across what we want to say through our evaluation studies or research in as simple ways as possible. It is always important to make our audience feel comfortable and enable them to ask what they may consider silly questions.

Now, decisions about how to organize communication depends upon a range of factors. It depends upon the scale of the project; the relationship between researchers, funders and other stakeholders; the extent to which the research is public; and the extent to which participation and feedback from the subjects of research is required. So, and this is very important. And this must be borne in mind when we are thinking about communication of results. When the scale of project is a large; when it is a very big government funded project; or a very big some government department funded project that has implications on larger public issues, let us say public health issues and so on and so forth, then the communication of result takes a different turn. And here, the relationship between researchers, funders and the stakeholders is also of utmost importance. Because here, the dissemination of results is also in a bigger scale.

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Okay. Lastly, looking at integration into the research process, communication basically needs to be built at various stages of the process. And it needs to be viewed as a 2-way process. And we need to be able to respond to input from stakeholders, if we wish to make our research relevant and useful. This, the communication process itself should also be thought through and constructed, so as to make the most of the work that we have done. And this view of research and communicating results as a non-linear process has implications for researchers and those using the research and funders.

Now, the way in which research is structured and the way in which it is evaluated, needs to reflect the non-linearity of the process. And if research is being done in the context of ongoing policy reforms, policy initiatives may change during the course of research. Therefore, the context needs to be kept in mind, in which communication can be integrated. As I said, in the ongoing policy reforms, policy initiatives may change during the course of the research. So therefore, there is a need for building space for ongoing discussions and a degree of flexibility is also desirable, so that time benchmarks and perhaps even the people working on the research project can be changed.

But if we are doing action research, making changes and examining their impact as part of the research, we will obviously need to build in frequent review sessions. In this case, policy and implementation will be directly part of the event. So, suppose we are trying to bring about some kind of an intervention based upon the evaluation study that we are carrying out. Various international organizations today carry out technology adoption surveys. Carrying out evaluation studies and deciding what kind of technology transfer needs to take place on the field, particularly in the case of let us say, rural development, agricultural equipments, implements and so on and so forth. Now, under these kinds of situations, it is important that there is frequent review sessions. And there is a need to increase the network with stakeholders. And therefore, here communication strategy becomes a very integral part of the research process.

Now, lastly, when we are looking at contexts in which communication can be integrated, building a pilot phase into the research or consultancy framework can be extremely useful. Because pilot periods allow our funders and the clients to assess the relevance and usefulness of the research question; and to amend the design methodology and tools to be utilized in research. But if the research time is too tightly scheduled or if the clients and funders are not kept informed about the importance of their inputs at the early stage, the flexibility of the project will be diminished. And it may not yield the results required. So, this is the importance of building a pilot phase into the research or consultancy framework. And these are the ways in which we can integrate communication into the research process.

Usually, amateur researchers feel that, communication of results is the end step. You have designed your research; you have designed your research objectives; you have collected the data; analyzed the data; and we usually think the research project is now complete. And communication implies simply writing up a report and handing it over to the sponsoring agency. However, that is not ideally the case, as far as communication is concerned. And therefore, various research and consultancy frameworks now have consultative workshops and consultative seminars as part of the research process, taking place at various levels, right from the initiation of the research till the completion of it. So, this is what we mean when we are seeing communication needs to be integrated into the research process.

Often, when we are carrying out development academic research, as students, we go to the field; we conduct our study; we collect data; analyze the study; and then conclude; and then finally submit our thesis through via a research committee. And often, we do not make an attempt to go back to the field and discuss with the participants regarding the results of the study. However, if we want to come up with better communication strategies, because, it is not just enough that we desire to do research because of the academic interests that we have. But also, there is an element of being able to bring some change. And if we have to bring some change in the process of carrying out development research, it makes sense to go back to the participants and discuss the study results that have come out at every step of the research process; so that the final results that we are being able to communicate, whether it is through research, through dissertations; or whether it is through results being communicated to the government or the bureaucracy, it becomes more enriching and has the possibility of being able to bring about real change.

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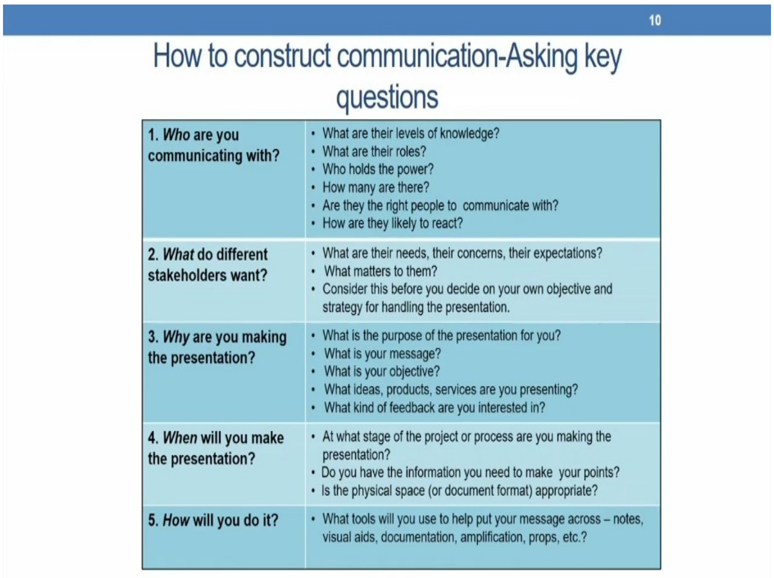

Okay. So, here is a list of key questions that need to be kept in mind when we are thinking about how to construct communication. These are the very cliched, who, what, why, when and how questions. And like in many other fields, these questions have a very important role to play, as far as communication strategy is concerned.

So, the first thing to keep in mind is, who are we communicating with. And the questions that need to be kept in mind here are very important. The who question is actually very important, because that determines who is the audience of the study. And therefore, the questions that need to be kept in mind by the researcher are: what is the level of knowledge of the audience that you are targeting; what are their roles; whether they are in power roles; whether the power hierarchy is tilted in favor of them or against them; who holds the power; how many are there; are they right people to communicate with; how are they likely to react; and so on.

It is in this context, let me take the example of various human development reports that have come out. State level human development reports in India and there have been many well-done reports. However, one report among them, the Chhattisgarh Human Development Report is widely said to be a people's report or what is referred to as the Jan Rapat, where the researchers kept going back to the field and asking people to write the report themselves in their own language, which was then finally transformed into a full-fledged human development report. And this is an innovative way of bringing about a real change, where the people themselves inform regarding what should or should not enter their development report.

The second issue is with regard to what do different stakeholders want. And here the questions that need to be kept in mind are: what are their needs; what are the needs of the stakeholders here; their concerns, their expectations; what matters to them. And therefore, consider this before you decide on your own objective and strategy for handling the presentation. Often, as academics, when we involve ourselves in consultancy projects, wherein the organizations or sponsoring agencies have a certain set agenda, whether it is the government or the non-government agencies, we usually go with a very academic oriented approach regarding explaining them with the help of technical jargons. But that rarely ever works. And therefore, it is important for us, as academies, and this particularly holds in the context of development research and development practice, it is important for us to ask what the stakeholders are expecting and to also speak their language when we are communicating our results.

Third is, why are you making the presentation; what is the purpose of the presentation for you; what is your message; what is your objective; what ideas, products, services are you presenting; and what kind of feedback are you interested in. Whether you will be able to work on those feedback, given the data that you have collected or the analysis that you have done.

Fourth is, when will you make the presentation; at what stage of the project or process are you making the presentation. This is a very important question, because, having done development research, doing development research now, from my experiences, I can share the fact that, it is very important that the presentation takes place at every stage of the research process, if you are working with the government or various non-government agencies. Because, then it is possible that the final results and conclusions are not palatable to the sponsoring agencies that you are working with. And also, it might become impossible for you to change the results when you are doing the final presentation, only after the end of the research project. Therefore, it is important that, particularly when you are planning change, when change is on the agenda of your research or policy intervention is on the agenda of your research design, it makes sense to bring in the component of presenting or communicating your research results at various stages of the research process. So, this is a very important question as to what stage of the project or process are we making the presentation; do you have the information you need to make your points; is the physical space appropriate, the document format and so on and so forth.

Lastly, how will you do it; what tools will you use to help put your message across nodes, visual aids, documentation, amplification, properties, etcetera, so on and so forth. So, this is a very useful 5 questions that need to be kept in mind when we are constructing communication.

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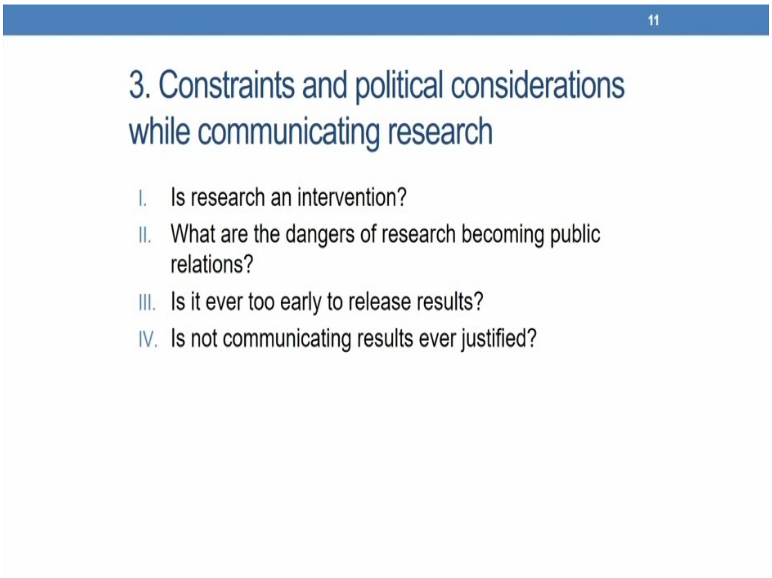

Now, let us get to the third point on constraints and political considerations while communicating research. And this is very important in the field of development practice, development policy practice. And there are 4 questions to ask under these. One is: Is research an intervention? Which obviously is. Research is an intervention, but how it becomes an intervention? Secondly: What are the dangers of research becoming public relations? Third: Is it ever too early to release results? And forth is: Is not communicating results ever justified? Is it possible ever that we finish a research project, we initiate a research project and finish it, but we do not want to communicate results. Is it justified?

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So, let us come to the first. Is research an intervention? Now, as I have already mentioned in the beginning, policy-oriented research itself constitutes an intervention. It is an intervention. For example, a research project to assess the needs of medium sized enterprises in Poland entailed extensive interviewing with the diverse community of support agencies operating in the country. Back, taking the case of India for example, whenever we are carrying out policy-oriented research whether in the form of qualitative case studies or survey research methods and so on, when we are interacting with the participants regarding the development question that we are asking, means that we are making our participants aware; or we are taking information from the participants about what they are aware about the development project that we are concerned with. So, in that sense, any kind of a policy-oriented research itself constitutes an intervention. It is a different matter what the participants do with that information dissemination that is taking place in the field, while the study is going on.

Researchers require an awareness of the nature of power in their work. What is it that they can or cannot do as a part of the research process? Because, as researchers, we are also stakeholders in the research project. We can go as far as suggesting a policy change. But implementation of policy is not in our hands. Therefore, as researchers, we need to be aware of the nature of power involved in the work that we are doing.

There is also a need for researchers and consultants to be reflective about our own actions and political dynamic. And it is important that we be aware about our own actions and political dynamic, because it has a larger bearing, larger impact upon the subjects that we are studying. And how it has a larger impact on the subjects that we are studying? Because, our own actions and our own political dynamic in the research that we are doing will go on to influence the research results that we are communicating. So, the danger lies in the differentials of power. And it is important to be sensitive to the needs of our audience and reflect on how our biases and preferences might shape their decisions.

For example, suppose we are conducting a study on a Rural Employment Guarantee Programme in a certain village in India. If we go with a bias that the Rural Employment Guarantee Programme is a drain on resources of the country, and therefore, it needs to be minimized as much as possible, we might be biased with regard to the kind of questions that we might want to ask to our participants in this case. And therefore, that will shape the kind of conclusions that we may come up with, with regard to the research results. And therefore, it is important to be sensitive to the needs of our audience; and reflect on how our biases and preferences might shape the decisions of the subjects.

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Second is, what are the dangers of research becoming public relations. Now, understand the fact that research is often carried out with political objectives being of primary importance. And the dangers are that, research is not undertaken in an ethical manner. And results are concocted with reference, mainly to desired ends and outcomes. Now, there is a difference between commissioning a piece of research for purely political purposes without regard for validity of results and commissioning serious research at a particularly advantageous time. In practice, the issues are often not this clear cut. Because sometimes, although the end public outcome of a piece of work may appear to be a gloss on reality and a piece of PR, commissioners of the research may have taken on board the more serious research findings.

Now, researchers and consultants also draw their own ethical codes around their practices. Researchers and consultants are interested in accuracy, not only to satisfy their ethics, but also because; ultimately it is not good for individual reputations, if results are seen to be concocted for political purposes. And the greater danger however is lack of courage on the part of researchers. It is always easier to deliver good news rather than bad. And there can be tendency to avoid including critical findings. And this is a very important consideration here, particularly when we are doing evaluation studies or trying to provoke feedbacks, when we are studying populist policy interventions and we are seeking some kind of a course correction with regard to popular policy interventions. Often, we may come up with very critical conclusions. Conclusions that go against the popular sentiment. And however, the researcher needs to have the courage to be able to communicate these results. So, as I said, it is always easier to deliver the good news rather than the bad. And part of the integrity of the researcher is to actually tell the whole story of their findings, rather than a partial one which suits the needs of the more powerful stakeholders.

Thirdly, now, is it ever too early to release results?

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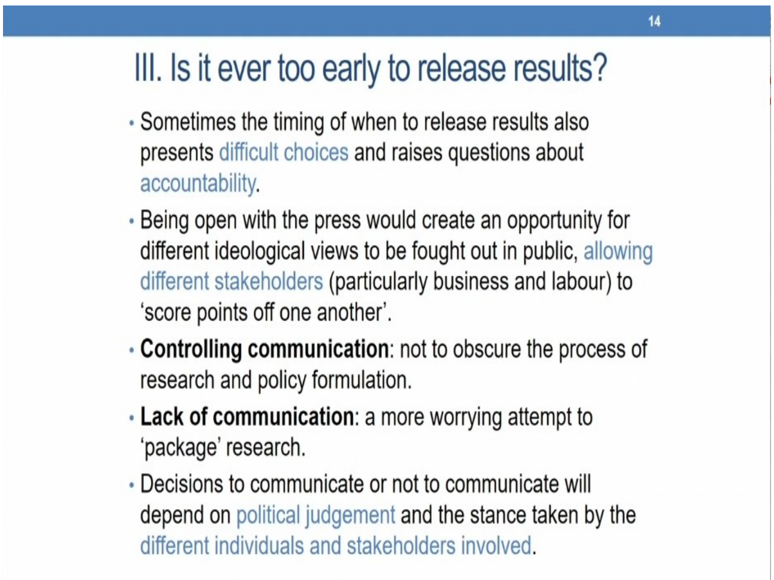

Sometimes, the timing of when to release results also presents difficult choices and raises questions about accountability. Being open with the press would create an opportunity for different ideological views to be fought out in public, allowing different stakeholders to score points of one another. And therefore, there are 2 things to keep in mind. Controlling communication: As in, not to obscure the process of research and policy formulation. And secondly, lack of communication, which is a more worrying attempt to package research. And decisions to communicate or not to communicate will actually depend on political judgement. And the stance taken by the different individuals and stakeholders involved.

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Finally, is not communicating results ever justified? Now, not communicating certain findings can lead to difficult ethical consideration. Now, confidentiality is essential when we are carrying out a development research project. But it is important to acknowledge power relations between informants and researcher, or between different sets of informants and the expectations of one set of respondents. And it is also important to recognize that respondents may be viewing an investigation from a very different angle from the investigator.

Now, these are very sensitive considerations that need to be kept in mind by the researcher. And there are no easy answers for this. It all depends upon, at the end of the day, we always go back to the intent of the researcher with regard to what is it that the researcher is trying to prove through the research that is being undertaken. Whether the researcher needs to keep in mind the expectations of the funders; or the researcher needs to keep in mind the expectations of being able to bring about some kind of a real change that we would like to see as part of the development agenda.

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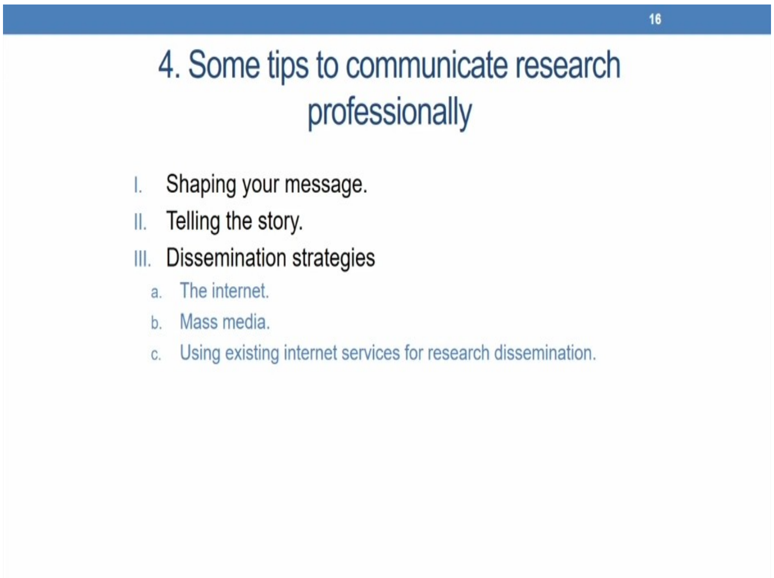

Okay. Here are some tips to communicate research professionally. They are under 3 heads; shaping message, telling the story and dissemination strategies.

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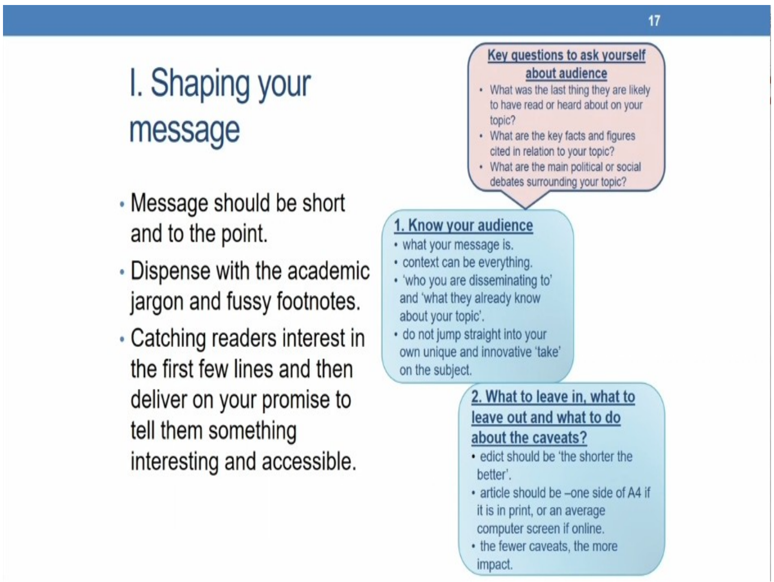

Let us come to the first, shaping your message. Message, whenever we are trying to communicate results, as I said in the beginning of this class, that often the more powerful do not have much time to read through the elaborate research results that we have; or they are not interested in the kind of methodology that we have used or the technical jargons that we may want to use as part of our communication strategy. And therefore, messages should be short and to the point. And we should dispense with the academic jargon and fussy footnotes. And that should catch readers interest in the first few lines. And then deliver on the promise to tell something interesting and accessible. And if at all, we want to make a very long report that needs to be disseminated, there should be some promise to the audience as to why they need to read it entirely and come to the end such that, they can be rewarded appropriately at the end. That there is a takeaway point for reading the entire research report.

Now, there are a few things that needs to be kept in mind; key questions to ask yourself about the audience. What was the last thing they are likely to have read or heard about on your topic? Let us say, you have conducted some research on a public health issue, let us say tuberculosis or pneumonia or on leprosy and so on. And you want to communicate results regarding this; let us say on Hepatitis B. And you want to communicate this research to your audience. So, some of the best ways of being able to catch the attention of your audience is as follows: To ask, what was the last thing they are likely to have read or heard about on your topic; what are the key facts and figures cited in relation to your topic; and what are the main political or social debates surrounding the topic.

So, it is important to know your audience with regard to what your message is. Because the context can be everything. Contextualizing your message will win points there. And who you are disseminating to; and what they already know about your topic. Therefore, do not just jump straight into your own unique and innovative take on the subject. It is important to understand what the audience is expecting out of the message; and then accordingly word the message as such.

A second question to ask with regard to shaping of messages is, what to leave in; what to leave out; and what to do about the caveats. And here the edits should be, the shorter the better. Article should be, one side of A4, if it is in print; or an average computer screen if online. And the fewer caveats, the more impact that we can have, that our research can have on the audience.

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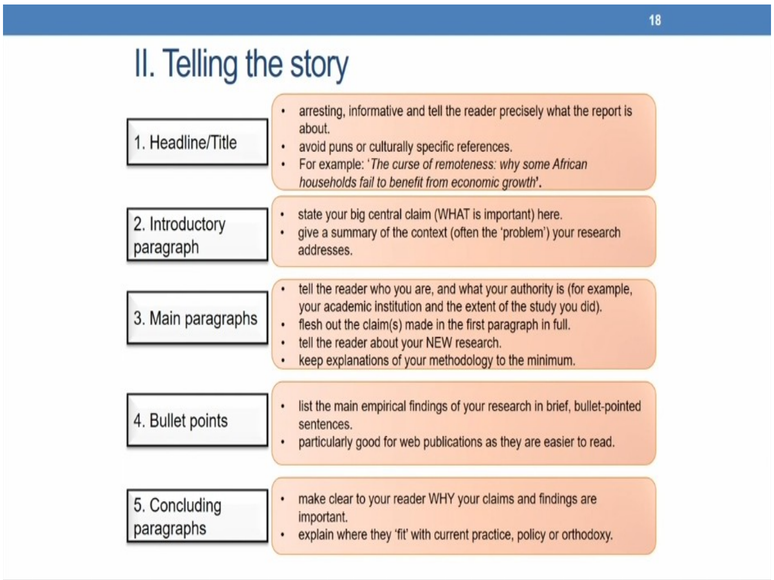

Secondly, we should know how to tell the story. Telling the story is very important. There can be, so, which means that, ultimately, we have a number of research findings; we have the entire research process completed. But we want to bring it into a coherent form by following sections and subsections and so on. First important thing is the headline or the title. The title should be arresting and informative and tell the reader precisely what the report is about. We cannot have a very long title, putting all of what is required into the title. And then, not promising a lot to come in the report and not having enough material what the title has suggested. So, it should be arresting, informative and tell the reader precisely what the report about. Title should always avoid puns or culturally specific references. A title should always appeal to a general audience. The general audience should be able to make sense of what is it that the report is trying to convey. For example, The Curse of Remoteness; Why Some African Households Fail to Benefit from Economic Growth. This is a very appropriate title.

Second is the introductory paragraph. This is a very important section of your communication, where you are stating your big central claim: what is important; what is it that you are trying to study; what is it that you are trying to communicate or you have researched on. So, you give a summary of the context, often the problem your research addresses.

The main paragraphs should contain the following. You tell the reader who you are and what your authority is. For example, your academic institution and the extent of the study you did. You flesh out the claims made in the first paragraph in full. So, in the introductory paragraph, you inform the audience about the research problem that you have studied. And in the rest of the paragraphs, you elaborate on the claims that you have made. You tell the reader what is new in your research. And you keep explanations of your methodology to the minimum.

Fourth is bullet points. You list the main empirical findings of your research in brief; bullet pointed sentences; particularly good for web publications as they are easier to read. And finally, the concluding paragraphs. You make clear to your reader, why you are making your claims and findings are important. And explain where they fit with current practice policy or orthodoxy. Depending upon who the reader of your report is, if you are doing an academic thesis or a dissertation, obviously it will run into pages; pages and pages of reports. But if you want to make a point to the sponsoring agency for bringing about some change; so, there is a transformative paradigm to it, then you stick to a fewer pages, let us say 2 to 3 pages, where the intent of your research comes out as lucidly as possible.

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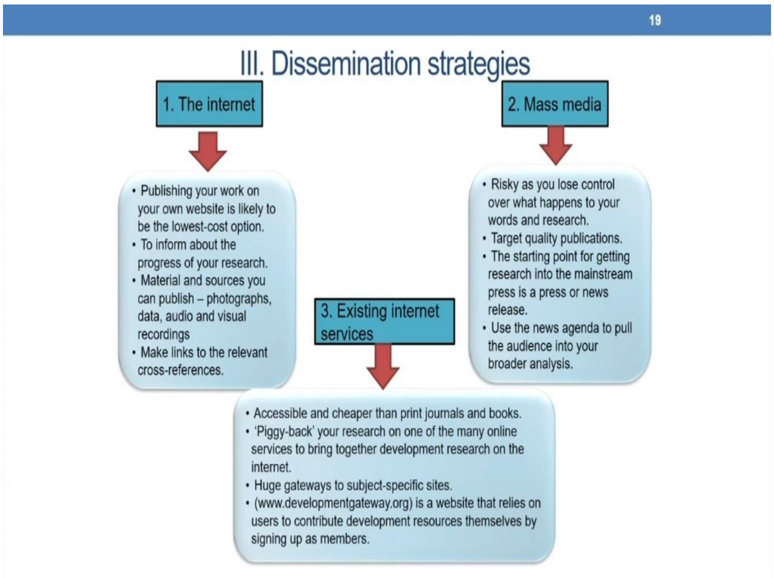

These days, there are various kinds of dissemination strategies with the coming in of different forms of mass media, news applications and so on and so forth. We have to be very careful with regard to our dissemination strategies. Internet for example, is a very low-cost option. You are pushing your work on your own website. And therefore, it is a low-cost option. You inform about the progress of your research, material and sources, you can publish photographs, data, audio and visual recordings. People who are into academic research will know that, these days we have a lot of options, whether it is LinkedIn or, let us say for example, ResearchGate, academia.edu and many such platforms that allows you to announce your research project. And then, inform the different stages that you have reached in your research project, discuss the conclusions and findings, which helps you in enriching the research findings that you are discussing.

Second is mass media. This is risky, as you lose control over what happens to your words and research, particularly television and newspapers. Therefore, you target quality publications. The starting point for getting research into the mainstream press is a press or news release. And you use the news agenda to pull the audience into your broader analysis. Existing internet services, accessible and cheaper than print journals and books. You can piggyback your research and one of the many online services to bring together development research on the internet. A huge gateway to subject specific sites. You have sites, for example, www.developmentgateway.org, medium and so on and so forth; which are websites that relies on users to contribute development resources themselves, by signing up as members.

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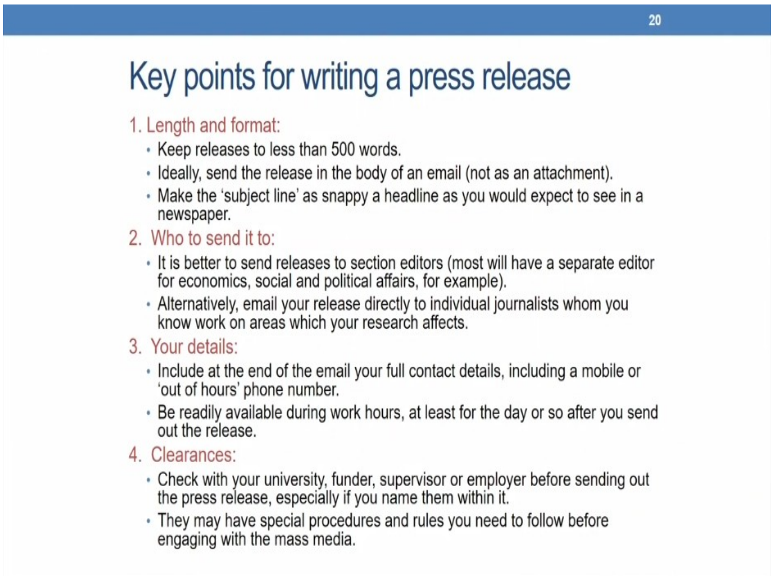

Let us look at some of the key points for writing a press release. One is length and format. You need to keep releases to less than 500 words. Ideally, you send the release in the body of an email and not as an attachment. And make the subject line as snappy a headline as you would expect to see in a newspaper. Second is, who to send it to. It is better to send releases to section editors. Most will have a separate editor for economic, social and political affairs, for example, and so on. Alternatively, you can email your release directly to individual journalists, whom you know work on areas which your research affects. You also need to give your details. Include at the end of the email, your full contact details, including a mobile or out of hours phone number. Be readily available during work hours, at least for the day or so after you have sent out the release. Finally, clearances. You must check with your university, funder, supervisor or employer, before sending out the press release; especially, if you name them within it. And they may have special procedures and rules you need to follow before engaging with the mass media.

So, in a nutshell, what we have done in this lesson is to look at some of the important points with regard to how to communicate results best. With regard to development research, there are a certain set of challenges that development academicians face, when they have to communicate the results outside of the academia. And there are a set of challenges that development practitioners have to face, because of the kind of challenges in the stakeholder hierarchy that they are facing. And, the balancing act is to understand these challenges. And understand the political sensitivity of the challenges, time the communication best; and understand the audience better, so that we can design our communication strategies better.

So, I hope this lesson on communication will help you in framing your dissertations and research reports or short communications to various agencies better. I will see you in the next class. Thank you.