Qualitative Research Methods
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Lecture 45
Influencing the Policy Progress with Qualitative Research

Welcome back to the NOC course titled qualitative research methods, my name is Aradhna Malik and I am helping you with this course and we will you know, we are in the process of winding up whatever we have studied till now, in the previous class we talked about how qualitative research contributes to the evaluation of social programs. In this lecture we will talk about how the policy process is influenced through qualitative research.

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Influencing the policy
process with
qualitative research
(Rist, 2000)

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So this is a direct application of qualitative research to the policy process and that is what we will talk about okay. Before we understand how qualitative research influences the policy process let's first find out what happens when policies are made, let's first understand the Dynamics of the policy making process, so this is again from a paper by Rist in the handbook of qualitative research methods, can you please focus on the screen thank you.

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Dynamics of the policy-making process
(Rist, 2000)

- "It is a process that evolves through cycles, with each cycle more or less bounded, more or less constrained by time, funds, political support, & other events."
- Reflexive
- Iterative
- "... often does not come to a closure"

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So this is from the handbook of qualitative research methods and this paper by Rist and so he says that our sorry Rist says that in policy making process is a process that "involves through cycles, with each cycle more or less bounded more or less constrained by time, by fund, by political support and other events."
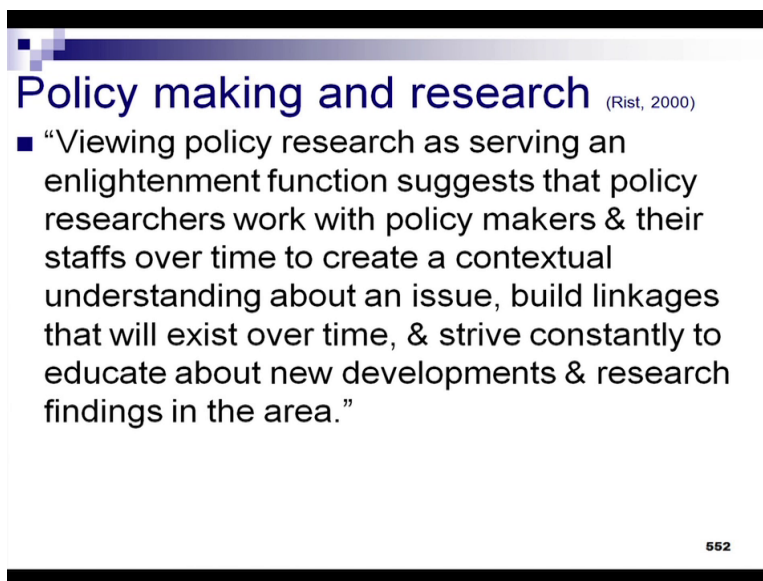
Policies are made at levels where you know there are lot of stakeholders involved, so we have to take the interest of the stakeholders into account, we have to take the interest of the people were being affected by a policy into account, we also have to take into account the constraints faced by the policy makers, we also have to take into account what the concerns of the policy implemented.

And there has to be a timeline, funds availability is a very critical issue and that often determined what kinds of policies are made, then political support is another issue and various other events in other the social political milieu, you know the environment, all of those things are a very, very big concern for policy makers, it's very complex process, very, very complicated.

The other characteristic of the policy making processes that it is reflexive, one: is constantly wondering excuse me one is constantly thinking about how whatever one has done is going to be implemented and one is forever waiting for feedback from the field, so the policy can be changed over time. It is iterative, so there is constant revision, constant reflection, constant revision, constant reflection, constant revision, constant reflection, going on in the policy making process.

And it often does not come to closure, because life around us is moving on, the needs of the world around us are constantly changing, so the policy making process never comes to a closure, we think we have got it all and then suddenly something new happens in the environment and then we realize okay there's something else that needs to be attended to so, it never comes to close and its reflexive, its iterative and it has to be done within certain boundaries okay.

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Policy making and Research, "Viewing policy research are serving and enlightenment function suggests that policy researchers work with policy makers and their staffs over time to create a contextual understanding over about an issue, build linkages that will exist over time and stripe constantly to educate about new development and research findings in the area."

So we are constantly trying to understand you know we assume that people who are conducting research on policy and the people who are making the policies are working hand in hand that may be the case, that is the ideal situation, we are also trying to understand that or we are assuming that both of these this network of policy makers and policy research is getting together and trying to understand it common or create a common contextual meaning of the situation.

The time to build linkages that will that will last sometime and they are constantly trying to educate each other about the development and research findings in the area, researchers are
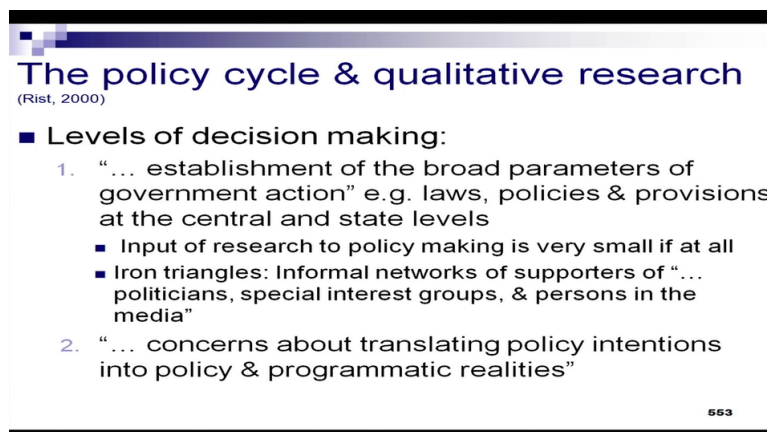
telling policymakers about the research findings in the area, policymakers are talking to researchers about the practical implications of the policies that are that they are making, we were talking about little, we were talking about utilitarianism in the previous class that is what policy makers are most concerned about.

How will this policy shape up in the public domain, will we be able to, will make a policy, will we be able to implement it, will somebody receive it, we may be able to go into the field and give people what we think they need, will they be receptive to it, so all of that has to be taken into account while designing policies, of course within the confines of the money and support and everything.

So that is how these two go hand in hand, research say this is what should be done, policymakers say this is what can be done and should and can are trying to constantly come together and then say okay they should be done, this can be done and then we have the third angle the beneficiaries of those policies and they say okay from this that you have created.

We will take this much, because this is what we really want, you can do many things, but we need only this much and we need it in large quantities, so that is kind of things, that that kind of things policymakers deal with on a regular basis okay.

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The policy cyclone and qualitative research, there are various levels of decision making, the first level is "establishment of the broad parameters of government action" for example laws, policies and provisions that the central and state levels, then this include or this involves the input of research to policy making and at this level the input of research to policy making is

very small if at all, the policy makers know what they can and cannot do so they say okay, this is our offering, now with him this what can you help us with.

The Iron Triangles: informal networks of supporters of "politicians, special interest groups, and persons in the media", so these persons in the media, why persons in the media? Media is a very, very powerful tool that takes whatever is decided to the muscles media influences respectability receptivity sorry, media influences receptivity of a policy, the way media share the information with the public help determine, how the public or how the beneficiaries will receive what the government is trying to give to them.

So media is extremely powerful and that is what happens you know that they are on one side and we have a special interest groups, people who are actually being affected, people who are working in the field, who have seen others being affected, so they have a very powerful voice and as time is going on, their voice is becoming even more powerful, so they said this is what needs to be done and that in turn influences the receptivity of what the government is doing.

And the third is the politicians, politicians again are public servants, they serve the public, they serve the community, so special interest groups become their voice, they become what they become their earphones so to say and the media becomes the voice of politicians if and where necessary, the media also acts as the voice of the public as and when necessary, so these triangle then ultimately determines how policies are made and then within the confines of this triangle.
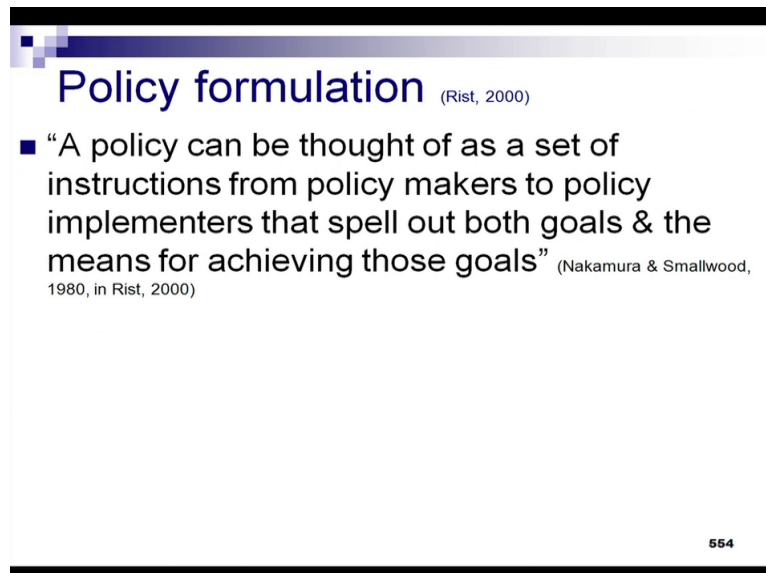
Then research sort of enters and say okay, this is what how we can play around or how we can fit whatever we have best to the needs of the community. The second level is, the second concern here is "concerns about translating policy intentions into policy and programmatic realities."

Policies are based on intentions, policies are based on somebody's willingness, somebody's keenness to do something for the general public that is where policies come from, somebody wants to do something for the public, somebody wants to enhance the healthcare facilities available to the public, somebody wants to enhance the level of education, the quality of education imparted in the public.

Somebody says okay well so much of technological development is taking place in the world, let me go out and give it to the rest of the world or to my people, so there is an intention driving this whole policy making process. Now intention needs to be translated into programmatic reality, the intention needs to be translated into something that the receivers, the beneficiaries will accept.

With the intention also needs to go through channel that is workable, so the implementers need to be included, the beneficiaries need to be included, all of this has to be thought through and that becomes very big challenge and we talked about the policy making process okay.

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The first step is policy formulation, "a policy can be thought of as a set of instructions from policy makers to policy implementers that spell out both the goals and the means of achieving those goals." So that is you know what is the goal? Where are we headed? And how can we do it? That is what is included in the policy.

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Information required to formulate policies (Rist, 2000)

- Information required to understand the issue at hand which is dependent upon "… the ability of policy makers to define clearly & understand the problem or condition that they are facing & for which they are expected to develop a response."
- Information required to understand "… what has taken place previously in response to this condition or problem"
- "… what is known of the previous efforts & their impacts that would help one choose among present-day options?"

The information required to formulate policies information, so we need information that is required to understand the issue at hand which is further dependent on "the ability of the policy makers to define clearly and understand the problem or condition that they are facing and for which they are expected to develop response."

Understanding of the issue is number one, we need to know what is happening in the field, we need to know where things are, where things need more effort from the government. Then the information required to understand "what has taken place previously in response to the condition of problem." So what is required? What has happened?

And what is known of the previous efforts and their impacts that would help one choose from among the present day opinion. What has happened in the past? What is required? How did what happened in the past influence, what is required today and what can be required tomorrow? And how what has happened in the past influence the choices that are available to us today for implementing policies that is very, very critical.

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Information required to understand the issue at hand (Rist, 2000)

- "What are the contours of this issue?
- Is the problem or condition one that is larger now than before, about the same, or smaller?
- Is anything known about whether the nature of the condition has changed?
- Do the same target populations, areas, or institutions experience this condition now as earlier?
- How well can the condition be defined?
- How well can the condition be measured?
- What are the different interpretations & understandings about the condition, its causes, & its effects?"

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The information that is required to understand the issue at hand: "what are the contours of this issue? So this is the checklist, what are the, what is the size and shape of the issue. Is the problem or condition one that is larger now than before, about the same or smaller? What is the size of the problem? Is anything known about whether the nature of the condition has changed? Is it the same type of problem that is continuing or has the type of problem changed?

Do the same target populations, areas or Institutions experience this condition now as earlier? So the catchment area the people were being affected by it, how well can the condition be defined? How can the condition be measured? What are the different interpretations and understanding about the condition, its causes and its effects?" How do different people see the condition that we are trying to deal with?

Government sees it one way, implementers sees it one way, the people who are affected by it see it another way, the special interest groups see it another way, the researcher see it in another way, so do we have all that information with us, if we have all that information it becomes very, very you know it is easier for us or if the policy formulation process becomes much richer.

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Information that is required to understand previous efforts: "What programs or projects have previously been initiated? How long did they last? How successful were they? What level of funding was required? How many staff members were required? How receptive were the populations or institutions to these initiatives? Did the request help or did the resist the interventions?" So these are the nuts and bolts.

What happened to the policy along similar lines that was implemented earlier? What was the policy, who implemented it? What were the resources that were required? What worked? What failed? So the integrity of whatever was done earlier is required, okay.
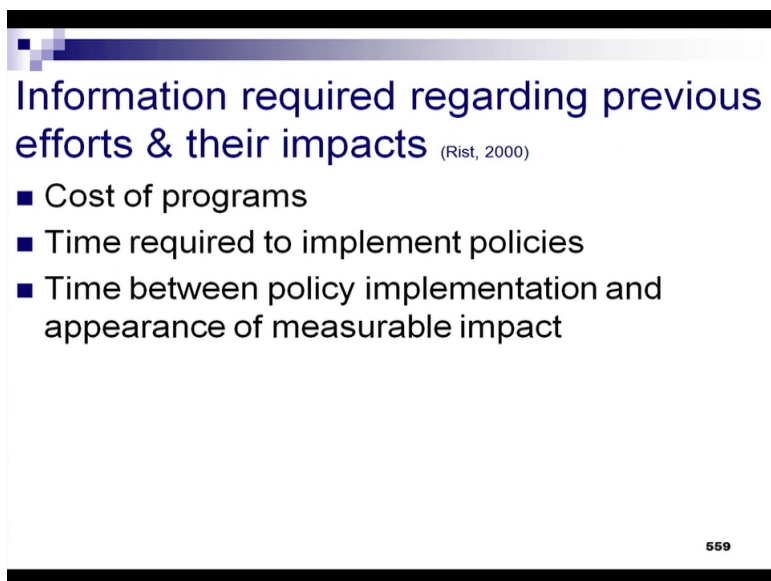
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Did the previous efforts address same condition of problem as currently exists or was it different? If it was different, how so? If it was the same, why are yet additional efforts

necessary? Are the same interest groups involved? What may explain any changes in the present interest group coalition? So what is required? if we are going to repeat what was done earlier, then why should we have a new policy for it, so all that is required.

So why do we need to put in additional efforts, let's just have status quo and keep the same types of resources, if it has been working, great. Why do we need additional inputs, so all of that has to be laid down very clearly?

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Information regarding previous efforts and their impacts: Cost of programs, money, everything requires money, everything requires time, everything needs to have a timeline, so we need to have, we need to know how much these programs cost, we also need to know how much time is required to implement policies, we also need to know how much time lapses between policy implementation and appearance and measurable impact, after all we all want to see something tangible.

We want to see the effects of our labor, as faculty we do our teaching, we prepare courses, we submit an outline, we talk, we prepare our lectures, we go deliver our lectures, then we have a midterm, we assess the students performance routinely to see whether they have understood what we thought, of course it also test whether they have prepared what we thought, put together they have understood what we thought.

Then at the end of it all, at the end of the semester we have the students give us feedback on what we did, so there is some closure, there is a time line, we all want to see tangible,

measurable, impact of what we do, in our profession it comes in the form of student performance and faculty feedback, in other professions you know you create a policy implement it.

If you are not able to see the fruits of your labor, then there is something missing, we all want to see the measurable outcomes, because after all money, time, energy is going into it okay, so that is very, very important.

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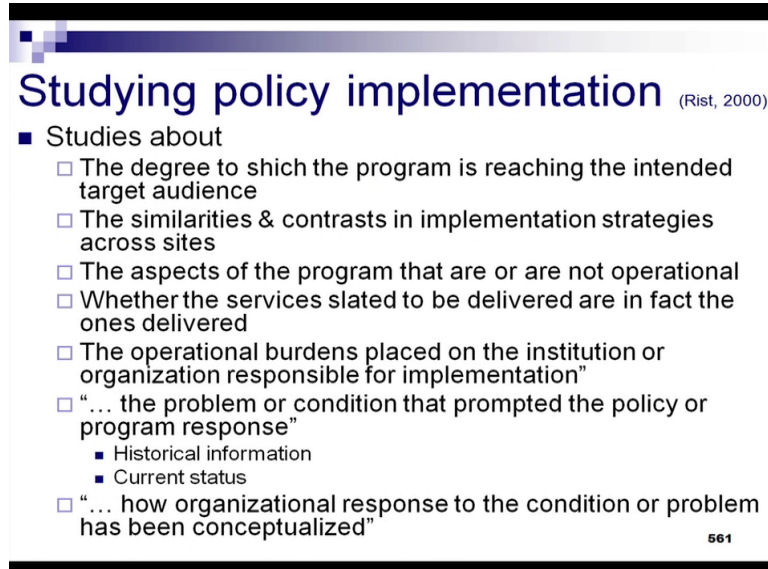

How can qualitative research contribute? To this we can conduct "studies on the social construction of problems, how are problems seen by the general community? How are problems seen by different state of society? The different interpretations of social conditions, the building and sustaining of coalition for change. Previous program initiatives and their impacts. Community and organizational receptivity to programs, organizational stability and cohesion during the formation stage, changing nature of social conditions." Etc.

We can also study the acceptance of various policy tools, we can "study intended and unintended consequences of the various policy instruments or tools that might be selected as the means to implement the policy." We can study impacts of different policy strategies to achieve desired objective, all of this requires an engagement with the stakeholders, with the implementers, with the policy formulators, all of this requires the an understanding of the way these different people or different influences of the policy process, view what has happened and their qualitative research comes in handy.

We need to see in the, we need to look in the grey areas, we need explanations, we need to go through those explanations and understand what is coming out of those explanations that is very, very important.

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How do we study policy implementation? We can conduct studies about the degree to which the program is reaching the intended target audience. The similarities and contrast in implementation strategies a cross sites. The aspects of the program that are or are not operational. Whether the services slated to be delivered are in fact the ones delivered. The operational burdens placed on the institutional organization responsible for implementation.

"The problem or condition that prompted the policy or program response" and this could include historical information, current status. "How organizational response to the condition or problem has been conceptualized." So various ideas, I hope some of you will take these ideas and you will you know conduct studies and get back to me, on how these are shaping up, so you can conduct these studies.

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Studying policy implementation (Contd.)
(Rist, 2000)

- Studies regarding organizational response to policy implementation efforts:
  - "Expertise & qualifications of those responsible for the implementation effort
  - Interest shown by management & staff
  - Controls in place regarding the allocation of resources
  - Organizational structure & whether it adequately reflects the demands on the organization to respond to this initiative
  - What means exist in the organization for deciding among competing demands
  - Strategies the organization uses to clarify misunderstandings or ambiguities in how it defines its role in implementation
  - What kinds of interactive information or feedback loops are in place to assist managers in their ongoing efforts to move the program toward the stated objective of the policy"

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Then studies regarding organizational response to policy implementation efforts: you can conduct and study of relationship between "expertise and qualifications of those responsible for the implementation effort. Interest shown by management and staff. Controls in place regarding the allocation of resources. Organizational structure and whether adequately reflects the demands of the organization to respond to this initiative.

What means exist in the organization for deciding a monk competing demands. Strategies the organization uses to clarify misunderstandings or ambiguities in how it defines its role in implementation. What kinds of interactive information or feedback loops are in place to assist managers in their ongoing effort to move the program toward the stated objectives of the policy." So various ideas are there and this is how we can contribute to the policy making process.

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Studying policy accountability (Rist, 2000)

- "What the program or policy did or did not accomplish?
  - Were the objectives for the program met?
- "… study of anticipated & unanticipated outcomes, changes in understandings & perceptions as a result of the efforts of the program or policy, the direction & intensity of any social change that results from the program, & the strengths & weaknesses of the administrative/ organizational structure that was used to operationalize the program."
- "… information on how confident they can or should be in the measures being used to determine program influence."

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How do we study policy accountability? "What is the program or policy did or did not accomplish? What were the objectives for the program? Were the objectives for the program met? Where did we start and where did we end? What did we do? Have we gone from point A to point B? Have we been successful in going from point A to point B or not? "

"Study of the anticipated and unanticipated outcomes, changes in understanding and perceptions as a result of the efforts of the program or policy, the direction and intensity of any social change that results from the program and the strengths and weaknesses of the administrative or organizational structure that was used to operationalize the program, etcetera."

"Information on how confident they can or should be in the measures being used to determine program influence."
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Studying policy accountability: Word of caution (Rist, 2000)

- "Programs & policies make countless midcourse corrections, tacking constantly, making changes in funding levels, staff stability, target population movements, political support, community acceptance, & the like."
- "… determination of whether in fact the condition itself has changed or not, & what relevance the program or policy did or did not have to the present circumstances."
- Important to "… monitor the ongoing characteristics of a condition" in order to suggest mid-course modifications & adjustments.

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Studying policy accountability we can you know there, we must be when he study policy accountability, we must be careful of a few things the first one is: "programs and policies make countless midcourse corrections, tacking constantly, making changes in the funding levels, staff stability, target population movement, political support, community acceptance and the like."

So we need to account for or we need to take all these mid program, midcourse, corrections mid cost changes into account while evaluating polices, then we also need to talk when conducting research on policies.

We also need to be careful of the "determination of whether in fact the condition itself has changed or not and what relevance the program or policy did or did not have to the present circumstances."
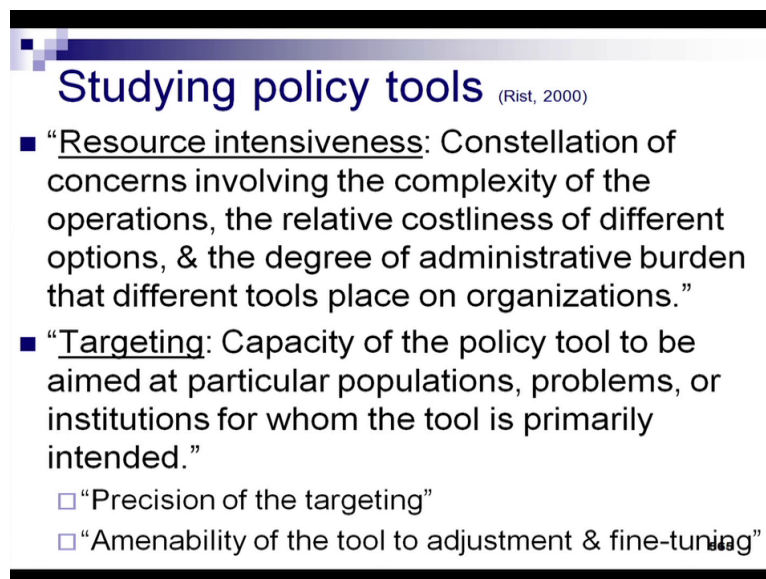
So we need to understand the cause and effect relationship. Did the policy help or hinder or the spoil the current condition, yes or no, how do we know that? Did the current condition change on its own ordered the policy have anything to do with the current, with the condition of the situation that we are dealing with?

So the cause and effect relationship can be explored and we really need to be very careful and assessing that as to how the cause and effect relationship, what caused what? Needs to be brought out through our study. It is very, very important to "monitor the ongoing

characteristics of a condition" in order to suggest mid-course corrections and adjustments. And also in order to understand what affected what? That is not mentioned here on the slide.

So it's very, very important to monitor the ongoing characteristics of the condition, in order to understand what affected what? In order to establish that that relationship between the between what we thought we could do and what actually happened and why, did what we do contribute to what actually happened, if it all alright.

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Studying policy tools: "Resource intensiveness: Constellation of concerns involving the complexity of operations, the relatives costliness of different options and the degree of administrative burden that different tools plays on organization."

"Targeting is another policy, to targeting we, this includes the capacity of the policy tool to be aimed at particular populations, problems or institutions for whom the tool is primarily intended. And need to be we need to take into account the "Precision of the targeting", we also need to take into account the "Amenability of the tool to adjustment and fine tuning."

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Studying policy tools (Contd.) (Rist, 2000)

- Institutional capacity: "Ability of the institution to deliver on the tasks that have been delegated to it."
- Political risks: "…issues cluster around concerns of unanticipated risk, chances of failure, & timing [which can significantly impact] the sustainability of the policy initiative."

The institutional capacities and other things, "ability of the institution to deliver on the tasks that have been delegated to it." that is one more concerned here, Political risks "the issues cluster around concerns of anticipated risk, chances of failure and timings, so these are some of the risk we are dealing with, which can be significantly impact the sustainability of the policy initiative."

We know currently the new United States, Mr. President Donald Trump is not, is rethinking about the Obama Healthcare policy put in place by Mr. Obama and so that is what we need to be careful of, policy has been put in place and other politician come then says no, there's something in here is not working out, so we need to change things.

So Mr. Trump is now revisiting everything that Mr. Obama did and is trying to change things as time goes on, so we need to be mindful that these changes can happen and these are political risks associated with policy implementation. And that is all we have time for in this lecture, so this is a very, very, very important aspect of our application of qualitative research methods.

And this really brings us to a close, now this was the last pretty much the last lecture in the series the next lecture will be a wrap up, the next lecture will be a summary of whatever we have covered in this whole course till date, it has been you know if you have any questions I suggest that you at least let us know you know as soon as possible.

So if required we can squeeze and maybe one lecture answering your queries at some point, I would welcome you to do, that I don't know when this lecture will be aired, but I will still post an announcement on, the announcement portal of the course and see if we can include that one lecture addressing peoples queries.

So after this will be a tiny summary of the whole course that as it has progress and I will try and address your concerns may be in that also and thank you very much for staying with us and I look forward to summarizing in wrapping up the course with you the next class, thanks a lot.