STATUS OF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION RESEARCH: AN EXAMINATION OF THE RECENT TRENDS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Abstract

This study is a response to the challenge of Development Communication (DevCom) scholar Felix Librero to analyse the status and trends in UP Los Baños DevCom research that may help in reinvigorating the research thrust of the college attuned to the needs of time. As a rejoinder to previous efforts of DevCom scholars Gomez and Librero, the authors looked into 35 graduate research studies: 19 Masteral theses and 16 Doctoral dissertations that were produced from 2008 to 2015. The papers were evaluated according to a) Communication Tradition b) DevCom Thread c) Theories used, and d) Research Method employed. The review also revealed that DevCom research is primarily inclined to the Cybernetic tradition, still predominantly influenced by the modernisation paradigm, as demonstrated by the heavy use of linear, one-way communication models and theories such as diffusion of innovations, two-step flow, or extension approaches. This is more evident in the classification of Devcom research into the typologies of Colle and Quebral. Majority of the researches can be classified in the extension thread, although there is a growing interest in community participation theme. On the other hand, following Quebral's typologies, most of the MS researches are people research, while PhD dissertations are varied and cut across people research, normative and policy researches. The quantitative method, which has been a preferred approach since 1985 when Gomez declared it dominant in DevCom research and even until 2012 in Librero's review of researches from 2001 to 2010, remained popular among more than half of the researchers while the rest ventured into qualitative, except for a few who tried mixed methods. In a concerted effort to make a synthesis of what has been done and realised so far in DevCom research areas and concerns, the proponents hope to contribute to the strengthening of the research culture in DevCom while putting into consideration its responsiveness to the needs of society.

Keywords: development communication, DevCom UP Los Baños, communication research

Introduction

DevCom research began in the 1950s, back when it was still the Office of Extension and Publications (OEP) under the University of the Philippines College of Agriculture (UPCA). Research efforts were directed towards problem solving and enhancing effectiveness of development projects. The production of applied research has greatly influenced the descriptive and problem-identifying nature of most of the research works produced in decades. Moreover, research frameworks in the 1960s were geared towards

identifying rural media available, and then shifted towards access to and availability of ICTs in the 90s (Librero, 2012). Since then, studies have contributed to the now voluminous collection at the College of Development Communication in UPLB. However, it must be emphasised that DevCom research is not merely research on communication media or agricultural developments. It is, by itself, a body of knowledge that has been, and continues to be built on over the years; one that has a reach so wide it cannot be simply categorised under one typology.

DevCom research, just like the field that it represents, is dynamic. What may be of interest in the 1980s may not be as interesting now that we are in the 21st century. For example, the demand for descriptive and informative studies on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) have waned, simply because we are now living in it. Just like what Librero (2012) said, DevCom aims at moving targets all the time.

As a dynamic field of study, DevCom should continue to be attuned with the times, not only with the topics studied, but also with the method of generating knowledge from research. This study, through a qualitative analysis of MS and PhD theses, aims to provide future DevCom generations a general sketch of what has already been done in terms of research, and shed light on which areas need further exploration. This can serve as reference to students as they are expected to contribute to the growing discipline of Development Communication. As what Librero (2008) said, research like this could help formulate theories grounded in the practice of DevCom particularly in the developing world.

Literature Review

Several meta-researches had been conducted examining trends in DevCom research. According to Ogan et al. (2009), Fair in 1989 compared the DevCom studies conducted from 1958-1975 with those conducted from 1976-1986. Results revealed that researches in 1976-1986 employed positivist and functionalist analyses, supporting modernisation paradigm.

In 1997, Fair and Shah did similar kind of meta-analysis for studies between the periods 1987-1996. Findings suggest that the studies in these periods utilised "a wider range of frameworks and approaches" (Ogan et al., 2009:658) and are "more theoretically diverse" (Servaes, 2016:2) as compared to the studies in 1958 – 1986. Ogan et al. (2009) also noted the utilisation of feminist, dialogic, participatory approaches during these periods in contrast to the modernisation approaches in the 1958 – 1986 studies.

In 2009, Ogan and his colleagues attempted to continue the same kind of meta-research previously cited but this time combining meta-analysis with qualitative content analysis. They reviewed 211 scholarly articles published in peer-reviewed journals found in the Communication and Mass Media Complete online database and Directory of Open Access Journals published between 1998-2007 using keyword search "DevCom" combined with "globalisation", "health", "governance", "education", "ICT", "democracy", and "economy". Their findings suggest that although the focus of the studies shifted to ICT from mass media, modernisation paradigm resurfaced and became the most popular approach again as close to half of the studies surveyed used quantitative methods such as surveys. There were few attempts employing participatory approaches which were more popular in the 1987-1996 studies of Fair & Shah (1997). They also noted a declining number of published researches between 1998 – 2003.

In 2010, Shah also conducted a meta-research of 183 DevCom studies that were published between 1997-2006. Unlike Ogan et al. (2009) who focused on peer-reviewed scholarly journals, Shah (2010) included 38 book chapters and seven books along with 138 journal articles that have been located using standard indexes and electronic databases. Similar to the findings of Ogan et al. (2009), DevCom researchers utilised theories in the modernisation paradigm particularly those dealing with media impact more often in these periods (1997 – 2006) than in the previous periods (1957 – 1986 and 1987 - 1996). Participatory theories that surfaced in the 1987 – 1996 studies also appeared in these periods (1997 – 2006) along with other neo-Marxist (e.g. hegemony, media imperialism, and dependency) and critical theoretical models (conscientisation, public sphere and digital divide).

In the Philippine context, Gomez (1993) noticed in his review of 219 undergraduate and graduate studies in Devcom that "by nature, DevCom research is issue-oriented, problem-oriented, and action-oriented and its central concern is to seek solutions to specific problems" (p. 53). Meanwhile, in his article Status and Trends in Development Communication Research in the Philippines, and

Development Communication Education in Los Baños: Contribution from Graduate Research, Librero (2005; 2012) attempted to generalise the direction of DevCom research over the years. By conducting a meta-analysis of 91 graduate research from 1964 to 2010, he provided a bird's eye-view of what areas DevCom research has battled so far.

Similar to the findings of Gomez (1993), Librero (2012) observed that frameworks employed in the 32 dissertations produced from 2001 to 2010 were concerned more about solving already "existing field problems" and clarifying "conditions affecting development programmes" (p. 236). Results showed that 88.9% of 32 dissertations "simply identified and described the communication problems existing in the research locales" (p. 238). Librero hinted that mere descriptions of new findings or knowledge generated from these conditions are not enough--they must be theorised. He assumed that there may be lack of efforts at Devcom when it comes to formulating hypotheses, or theorising.

In 2016, Madrid & Cagasan also conducted meta-analyses of 203 undergraduate and graduate thesis and case studies of the students in Visayas State University, Leyte, Philippines for the periods 1979-2008. They found that most of the studies conducted were in agriculture, mass media, and health. Issues on environment and ICT emerged in more recent years. As the focus of most studies was on audience effects testing for relationship of variables, quantitative methods, particularly survey, were predominant, although there was an increasing number of those which utilised qualitative and mixed methods. Similar to the recommendations of Librero (2012), they encouraged studies focusing on theory building and not just theory testing.

Theoretical Underpinnings of DevCom

Traditions of Communication Theory: Mapping Research Theories

In his seminal article "Communication Theory as a Field," Robert Craig (1999) proposed a constitutive view of the communication theoretical landscape, wherein "relationships, identities, and tasks are in the communication" (Manning, 2014). Therefore, communication is not a secondary phenomenon that can be explained by antecedent factors. Due to the field's interdisciplinary nature, he posited that there should be a dialogical-dialectical coherence—to agree to disagree—rather than simply ignore each other and interpret communication based on what each field has to say, e.g. psychology, sociology, economics. Hence, he laid down seven (7) traditions that "offer distinct ways of conceptualizing and discussing communication problems and practices" (Craig, 1999).

The traditions identified by Craig offer "distinct, alternative vocabularies that describe ways of conceptualising communication problems and practices" (Griffin, 2000). In his book "A First Look at Communication Theory," Griffin provides a good discussion of the seven (7) traditions based on how they define communication, also suggesting practical communication problems that each tradition can address (see Figure 1).
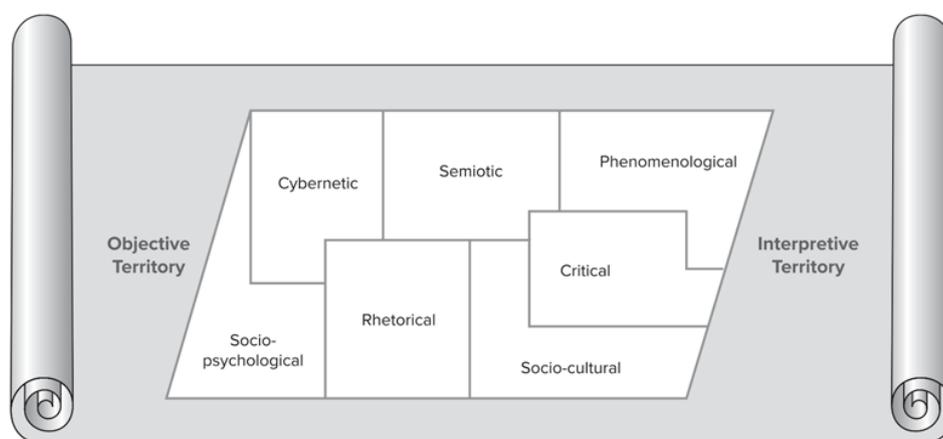
Figure 1: Survey map of traditions in the field of communication theory from: Griffin, E., Ledbetter, A., & Sparks, G. "Mapping the Territory (Seven Traditions in the Field of Communication Theory)". A First Look at Communication Theory. In McGraw-Hill, 10th Edition, 2018, p.45.

In socio-psychological tradition, scholars are heavily guided by careful, systematic observation in discovering and uncovering communication truths. Theories are usually used to look for cause-and-effect relationships that "will predict the results when people communicate" (Griffin, 2000). Coined from the term to describe artificial intelligence, the cybernetic tradition "illustrates the way feedback makes information processing possible" (Griffin, 2000). Here, communication is viewed as a link connecting the separate parts of any system, "such as computer system, a family system, a media system, or a system of social support" (Griffin, 2000). Rhetoric tradition on the other hand, concerns "the art of using all available means of persuasion focusing upon lines of argument, organisation of ideas, language use, and delivery in public speaking" (Griffin, 2000). Hence, communication here is viewed as artful public address. Semiotic tradition covers communication studies that deal with "verbal and nonverbal signs that can stand for something else, and how their interpretation impacts society "(Griffin, 2000). In this tradition, communication is the process by which meaning is shared through the use of signs.

Meanwhile, communication research under socio-cultural tradition looks at the communication process as the creation and enactment of social reality. The socio-cultural tradition is "based on the premise that as people talk, they produce and reproduce culture" (Griffin, 2000). Therefore, our view of reality is strongly shaped by the language we use. On the other hand, critical tradition views communication as a reflective challenge of unjust discourse consistently challenging:

a. the control of language to perpetuate power imbalances,
b. the role of mass media in dulling sensitivity to repression, and
c. blind reliance on the scientific method and uncritical acceptance of empirical findings.

Lastly, phenomenological tradition "explores the possibility of understanding the experience of self and others" (Griffin, 2000). This tradition places great emphasis on people's perception and their interpretation of their own experience.

With the possibility that the seven traditions cannot fully cover every approach to communication theory, Craig suggests for a pragmatist tradition, "a pluralistic land where different perspectives on truth could all be legitimate in different ways" (Griffin, 2000). Pragmatism is an "applied approach to knowledge; the philosophy that true understanding of an idea or situation has practical implications for action" (Griffin, 2000). Thus, this tradition leans to practical problems while evaluating ideas based on how useful they are rather than comparing them with an absolute standard of truth.

Methods

As a rejoinder to previous efforts of DevCom scholars Gomez and Libero, this paper reviewed a total of 35 MS and PhD theses (19 and 16, respectively) from 2008 to 2015 in terms of the following:

a. the Tradition of Communication Theory they belong to, based on Communication Theory as a Field (Craig, 1999),
b. the DevCom Thread they fall under, with reference to Colle (as cited in Librero, 2012)
c. the Theories that were used, and
d. the Research Method employed.

This review sought to find out if there are changes or modification in the research direction and priorities of the new breed of scholars since the last review, as influenced by the fast-changing communication technologies, volatile market economy affecting the living conditions of the poor, threats of climate change and environmental risks affecting farmers and vulnerable groups, and other socio-political issues.

While DevCom research can be analysed according to the initial typologies as suggested by Quebral (1993), and threads of DevCom by Colle (as cited in Librero, 2012; Flor, 2007), this paper provides an additional layer of analysis by using Craig's seven (7) traditions of communication theory, which include:

a. cybernetic,
b. socio-psychological,
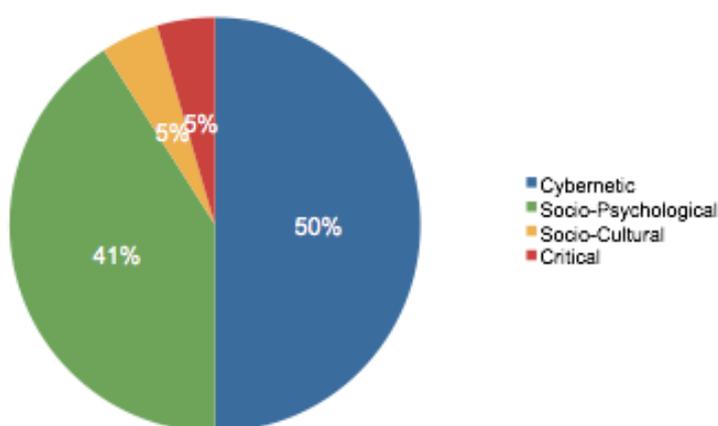c. socio-cultural,
d. critical,
e. rhetorical,

     f.   phenomenological, and

     g.   semiotic.

Using the theoretical anchor of each research study, these were classified according to the tradition they subscribe to.

Results and Discussion

The Traditions of Communication Theory

After analysing 35 MS and PhD theses from 2008 to 2015, it was found that majority (50%) of research subscribe to the Cybernetic tradition. This is closely followed by the Socio-Psychological tradition (41%). Only one (1) research each was reported to subscribe to the Socio-Cultural and Critical traditions (see Figure 2a).

Figure 2a: Distribution of traditions subscribed to by MS theses, 2008-2015.

On the other hand, it was found that most (32%) PhD dissertations are also guided by the Cybernetic tradition. This is followed by the Socio-Cultural and Critical traditions (21% each), and Socio-Psychological tradition (16%). There was one (1) research reported to fall under the semiotic, and Pragmatist traditions (see Figure 2b).
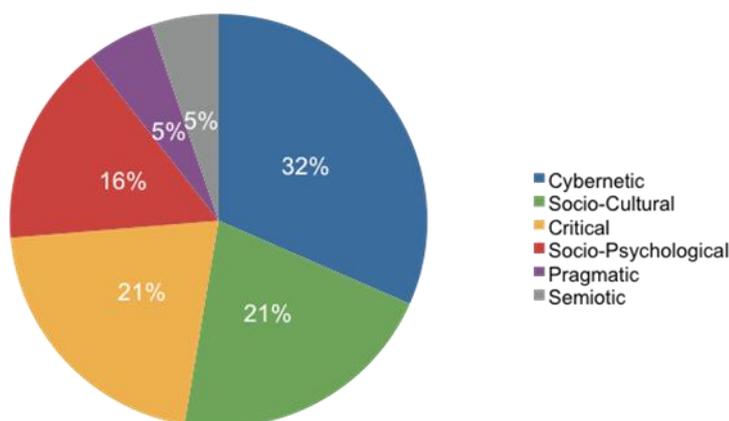
Figure 2b: Distribution of traditions subscribed to by PhD dissertations, 2008-2015

As evidenced by an analysis of both MS and PhD studies, DevCom research is primarily inclined to the Cybernetic tradition; it is still predominantly influenced by the modernisation paradigm, as demonstrated by the heavy use of linear, one-way communication models such as diffusion of

innovations, two-step flow, or extension approaches (Servaes & Malikhao, 2008). However, Fair (1989 as cited in Ogan et. al, 2009) accounts that subscribing to the dominant paradigm "failed to account for many of the social, political, and economic (structurally related variables) important to the process of national development in developing countries" (p.661). Instead of disappearing from literature, the modernisation paradigm resurfaces either explicitly or implicitly from time to time.

Communication from Cybernetic tradition "prevents or corrects deviation from the prescribed social path" (Ongkiko and Flor, 2003, p.137). This tradition also provides a detailed and systematic approach in addressing a problem through Systems Theory (Ongkiko and Flor, 2003). Researchers liken society to a system that may disintegrate because of entropy; hence, it is expected to deviate from its desired path (Ongkiko and Flor, 2003). The role of DevCom, as it is a planned communication to attain a desired change, is crucial in ensuring that society would go according to its goal or path. In the end, researchers discover what causes what until the root cause of the problem is identified.

Because it emerged during a period wherein priority thrust was to "stem rural unrest," DevCom leans towards poverty, unemployment, high population growth, inequality, environmental degradation and the loss of arable land, malnutrition, and ethnic conflict — all of which can be answerable by finding out how communication can help in battling these problems (Ongkiko & Flor, 1998).

On a final note, DevCom has not veered away yet from its roots in disseminating information as it still tends to focus on viewing communication as a link between the different elements of any social system. The field cannot simply do away with using research to improve communication processes and changing behaviour towards certain social issues and problems.

However, we must also take into consideration that new traditions are slowly coming into the picture. While there were only a few reported researches that subscribed to the semiotic, critical, and pragmatist traditions, these small numbers spark hope that in the future, the direction of DevCom research can take a different path from the dominant paradigm.

Framework: Assessment of Theoretical Grounding

Theory and research are two intertwined, not unrelated processes (West & Turner, 2013). Theory, which is generally defined as an "abstract system of concepts and their relationships that help us to understand a phenomenon" (West & Turner, 2013, p.46) and a lens by which we make sense of our social world (Miller, 2004), serves as the impetus for research (Fawcett, 1978). There exists a dialectic relationship between the two where "theory determines what data are to be collected and research findings provide challenges to accepted theories" (Brown, 1977 as cited by Fawcett, 1978).

Librero (2012) challenged the new breed of DevCom researchers to explore theorising, saying that mere descriptions of new findings or that knowledge generated from these conditions are not enough. Since his last review in 2010, have there been attempts at theorising communicative situations in DevCom research? Are there leaps from mere descriptive framework to theoretical formulations? Theoretical frameworks serve as the foundation of any study. With identified theories, concepts, and constructed models, they attempt to explain how and why an observed phenomenon happens or operates. Table 1a below reflects the MS list of theories used per research, as well as their respective traditions while Table 2b presents the detailed PhD list of the theories used by each research, and their respective traditions.

Table 1a: Matrix of MS Theses by Theory and Tradition, 2008-2015

No.	Title	Year	Theory	Tradition
1	Participatory Development Communication in a Development Project of the Federation of Lake Sebu T'Boli Ancestral Domain in South Cotabato, Philippines	2008	Input-Process-Output Models of Communication	Cybernetic
2	Communication Process in Production and Marketing Among Small-Scale Layer Raisers in San Jose, Batangas, Philippines	2010	Social Network Theory	Socio-Psychological
3	Effectiveness of the Computer Game Democracy 2 as an Educational Medium for Teaching	2010	Constructivist Learning Theory	Socio-Psychological

	Development Issues in Devc 10 (Introduction to Development Communication)			
4	Risk Communication Behaviour Towards Environmental Risks Among Upland Farmers in the Dampalit Watershed, Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines	2010	Risk Communication Theory	Socio-Psychological
5	Communication in Multi-Sectoral Collaboration of the Community-Based Rehabilitation Programme for Persons with Disabilities in San Jose De Buenavista, Antique, Philippines	2011	General Systems Theory	Cybernetic
6	Training in Participatory Programme Development: Knowledge, Perception and Skills of Researcher-Broadcasters in Radyo DZLB Los Banos, Laguna, Philippines	2012	General Systems Theory	Cybernetic
7	Mobile Phone Appropriation Among Coffee Farmers of Amadeo Cavite	2013	Diffusion of Innovations	Cybernetic
			Theory of Planned Behaviour	Socio-Psychological
			Technology Acceptance Model	
			Cultural Studies	Socio-Cultural
			Domestication Approach	Socio-Psychological
			Uses and Gratification Approach	
			Frame Analysis	
8	Communication Strategies in the Promotion and Implementation of Eskwela as an Alternative Open Learning System for Out-Of-School Youth and Adults in Quezon City, Philippines	2013	Theory of Planned Behaviour	Socio-Psychological
9	Dissemination Pathways Towards Adoption of Sanitation and Hygiene Practices Among Household Heads in Popel Commune, Kampong Cham Province, Cambodia	2013	Behaviour Change Communication Theory	Socio-Psychological
			Dissemination Pathway	Cybernetic
10	Communication Process and Approaches in Community Service Among the Youth: The Case of UPLB Student Leaders	2013	Community Service Learning Framework	Cybernetic
11	Communication Factors in Biotech Corn Innovation-Decision Process Among Koronadal City Corn Farmers in South Cotabato, Philippines	2013	Diffusion of Innovations	Cybernetic
12	Voluntary Informal Knowledge Sharing from the Palayamanan Farmer Field School Participants to their Community in the Uplands of Silang, Cavite, Philippines	2014	Theory for Voluntary, Informal Knowledge Sharing	Cybernetic
13	Theorising Land Ownership: The Land Administration and Management Project's (LAMP) One Stop Shop Experience in Leyte	2014	Critical Theory	Critical
14	Communicating Stories of Change Among Farmers in a Community-Based Rice Production Project in Maria Aurora, Aurora	2014	Constructivism	Socio-Psychological

15	Communication in the Protection and Violation of Rights of Selected Persons with Autism (PWAs) in Laguna, Philippines	2014	Constructivism	Socio-Psychological
16	Training as an Educational Communication Intervention for Capacity Development among Staff in Selected Regional Offices of The Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau	2015	Adult Learning Theory (Andragogy)	Socio-Psychological
17	Communication, Adoption Constructs, and Adoption Decision of Smallholder Goat Farmers on Upgraded Goat Production Technology in Nueva Ecija, Philippines	2015	Diffusion of Innovations	Cybernetic
18	Communication Engagements in Marketing a Cultural Enterprise: A Study on Uses and Gratifications Theory Among Woodcarvers in Paete, Laguna	2015	Uses and Gratifications Theory	Socio-Psychological
19	Church Communication for Human Development: Perspectives of the Communication Ministry of the Society of the Divine Word Philippines Central Province	2015	Transformational Communication Model	Socio-Psychological

Table 1b: Matrix of PhD Dissertations by Theory and Tradition, 2008-2015

No.	Title	Year	Theory	Tradition
1	Narrative Analysis of Filipino Farmers' Stories of Participation in Grassroots Research and Extension in Rice Breeding and Production	2010	Theory of Communicative Action	Critical
			Social Constructionism	Socio-Cultural
			Dialogue	
			Semio-Narrative Concept	Semiotic
2	Power and Communication in the Participatory Upland Development Programme in the Dampalit Watershed of The Makiling Forest Reserve	2011	Structuration Theory	Socio-Cultural
3	Communicating Leadership Values to High School Students in Boarding Schools of Myitkyina Diocese, Kachin State, Myanmar	2011	Behaviour Change Theory	Socio-Psychological
			Transformational Leadership Theory	
4	Access and Utilisation of ICT-mediated Rice Technologies Among Agricultural Extension Workers and Farmers in Northeastern Mindanao, Philippines	2012	Second-Order Cybernetics	Cybernetic
			Technology Acceptance Model	Socio-Psychological
5	Analysis of Communication Initiatives in the Promotion of the Millennium Development Goal one Project (Self-Employment Assistance Programme) Towards Empowerment Among Selected Communities in Ilocos Norte Philippines	2012	Communication for Development	Critical
			Participation	
			Empowerment	
6	Stories as Communication Process Surfacing Research Constructs of Letran Calamba's Organisational Community	2012	Organisational Culture	Socio-Cultural

7	Community Communication and Coffee Farmers' Adaptation to Climate Variability in Amadeo, Cavite, Philippines	2013	Cybernetics	Cybernetic
8	Communication Delivery Systems for Knowledge Sharing and Decision Making among Rice Farmers Under LGU-Managed and Ngo-Managed Cyber-Villages in Infanta, Quezon Province, Philippines	2013	Cybernetics	Cybernetic
9	Communication Interventions in Empowering People's Organisation for the Rehabilitation of the Madongan Subwatershed, Ilocos Norte, Philippines	2013	Empowerment	Critical
10	Spatial Turn in Development, Poverty and Development Communication	2014	Discourse Analysis	Critical
11	Integration of Information and Communication Technology in Classroom Communication: The Case of an ICT4BE Project in Capiz, Philippines	2014	Constructivism	Socio-Pyschological
12	Governance Communication for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management: The Case of Two-Selected Municipalities in Iloilo, Philippines	2014	Cybernetics	Cybernetic
13	Theorising [Dis]Engagement, Voice and Silence in a Community-Based Forest Management Organisation	2015	Grounded Theory	Pragmatist
14	Communication Platforms and Compliance with Environmental Protection Regulations Among Fishcage Operators in Taal Volcano Protected Landscape, Batangas, Philippines	2015	Structuration Theory	Socio-Cultural
15	Rural Communication Services in the Delivery and Adoption of Saline-Tolerant Rice Variety Among Farmers in Amtali, Barguna District, Bangladesh	2015	Cybernetics	Cybernetic
16	Harmonisation of Attributional Life Cycle Assessment and Good Agricultural Practices Certification for Commercial Bell Pepper [Capsicum Annuum L.] Production in Bukidnon Philippines (V5)	2015	Life cycle thinking and attributional life cycle assessment Environmental performance Sustainable vegetable production Management performance Good Agricultural Practices	Cybernetic

As can be gleaned from the tables above, some researches used more than one theory (which may come from different traditions), hence widening the scope of traditions subscribed to. Prominent in MS Theses in Table 1a is General Systems Theory, communication flow and those that study behaviour. Given that most of the studies are quantitative in nature, theories commonly employed are those which can be classified in the socio-psychological and cybernetics tradition.

Meanwhile, it can be observed in Table 1b that a considerable portion of PhD dissertations explored frameworks and theories that are qualitative in nature. Attempts to use varied theoretical lens from critical, socio-cultural, and semiotics traditions were also evident in these studies. They were the first to respond to the challenge of Librero (2012) to employ qualitative approaches in research. This could be a welcome development for DevCom research in the area of theorising knowing that critical theories,

postmodernism, and narrative approaches in organisation studies and in understanding societal conditions require an in-depth analysis.

As what can be deduced from Librero's (2012) article, DevCom researches have not been designed to theorise, but to identify a communication situation and provide solutions to existing problems through communication. However, he stresses that "new efforts must be pursued towards generalisations and formulation of research hypotheses or theoretical propositions that would lead to further strengthening of DevCom as an academic discipline" (p. 238). This means that a new slant in examining a problem must be tried which may develop a culture of hypothesis making or theorising.

Initial Typologies of Devcom

The initial typologies of DevCom research were conceptualised by Nora C. Quebral (Librero, 2012; Flor, 2007). According to this classification, DevCom research may fall under four (4) categories, namely: people research which focuses on the participants of communication, their needs, problems, values, beliefs, habits, and existing circumstances; effects research which centres on the impact of communication; normative research which deals with communication norms; and policy research which concerns with communication systems, services, structures, and infrastructures.

Table 2 below shows that majority of the MS researches fall under people research (52.63%) while policy research has been more prominent in PhD researches (50%). It should be noted also that there are very few normative research among the graduate researches (1 from MS and 2 from PhD) while the interest on effects research has dwindled from MS to PhD researches (5 to 0 respectively).

Table 2: DevCom Graduate Thesis and Dissertation Categorised according to Quebral's Typologies

Typologies	MS N=19		PhD N=16	
	Frequency	**%**	**Frequency**	**%**
People research	10	52.63	6	37.5
Effects research	5	26.31	0	0
Normative research	1	5.26	2	12.5
Policy research	3	15.78	8	50

Since DevCom started in the 1960s, research trends have demonstrated that DevCom is into people research (Gomez, 1993). Also, according to Jamias and Maslog (1993) DevCom researchers have always been receptive of what is happening in Philippine society. To illustrate the people-centred research, Ongkiko and Flor (2003) framed DevCom's relevance in addressing the problem of poverty that has continually plagued developing countries in the 21st century. In the prologue of their book, Ongkiko and Flor painted different images of poverty as springboard for succeeding discussions on why a development-oriented communication is needed, what perspectives can be used in examining the problem, and how communication can be planned to address such a problem.

DevCom scholars would agree that they privilege people research over others as evidenced in the continuous conduct of such research orientation since the 1960s. Without doubt, these works embody Quebral's (1988) definition of DevCom as a planned communication for the transformation of poor people's economic and social condition and unfolding of their potential. Quebral privileged DevCom for ordinary people in the countryside: the farmers, the fisherfolk, the rural women who do not have access to education and mass media.

While the popularity of people research has not waned among new batch of researchers especially the MS students, it is also worth noting that Policy-oriented research is gaining ground especially from PhD graduate students. This gives a sign that DevCom has slowly been shifting to a new research interest concerning communication systems, its structures and functions in organisations, as well as infrastructural development in the Philippines.

Threads of DevCom

Royal Colle classified DevCom research into what he referred to as threads (as cited in Librero, 2012). These threads include:
   a.   the UNDP thread, also known as development support communication,
   b.   the Extension thread, which refers to the process of linking researchers with the intended users of innovations,
   c.   the community participation thread, which considers the beneficiaries in the development process through their active participation,
   d.   the Population IEC and Health Communication thread, which focus on behaviour change, motivation, and attitudes on health issues,
   e.   the Social Marketing thread, which is concerned with planning and preparation prior to development of development messages and materials,
   f.   the Institution Building thread, which is interested in developing capabilities and facilities to organisations in carrying out DevCom, and
   g.   the ICT thread, which focuses on new communication technologies.

According to Flor (2007), the first five (5) threads are "general approaches in development projects," while the last two (2) are "components of, and interwoven into, the development communication approaches."

As shown in Table 3 below, extension thread dominates graduate research (in both MS and PhD), but there is a growing interest in institution building and community participation.

Table 3: DevCom Graduate Thesis and Dissertation Categorised according to Colle's Threads

Threads	MS N=19		PhD N=16	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Extension thread	8	42.10	5	31.25
Community participation thread	3	15.78	5	31.25
Social marketing thread	1	5.26	0	0
Institution building thread	6	31.57	4	25
ICT thread	1	5.26	2	12.5

Based on the result, extension research, which dominated DevCom works in the 60s, has remained popular even among the new breed of researchers. The legacy of extension research lives on among graduate students in this age of new media. Over the years, DevCom could not simply veer away from its research tradition, back in its humble beginning as OEP in 1954 in the UPCA.

It is also worth noting that community participation research has also registered higher number in both MS and PhD works. As a reaction against the modernist, top-down approach which characterised development projects in the 1960s, participatory research came in, influencing DevCom researches since the 1980s. DevCom forerunner, Quebral (1988) espoused participatory communication wherein stakeholders should get involved and undergo the process of Paolo Freire's consciousness raising approach or conscientisation. Comprising participatory activities are those that required engagement such as "partnership with local government units, coaching and on-the-job training and other forms of capacity building, interpersonal and group communication, working with NGOs in capacity building, community organising and other technologies of participation in empowering community, networking in mobilizing the community, cross-visits for sharing experiences and use of learning centres in institutionalising CRM learnings" (Maslog and Braid, 2012, p.254).

Another worth noting in the result is that despite the emergence of ICTs, DevCom researches have not tapped into the popularity of such technologies. In addition, the content of DevCom research as projected by Librero in his 2005 study that might look into the impact of ICT's, multimedia technologies, the Internet, and Telecommunications, has not yet been realised in the graduate researches in UPLB DevCom. Few researches on ICT focus more on its effectiveness as an educational medium, access and utilisation of ICT-mediated technology, and integration of ICT in classrooms.

Research Method: Quantitative vs. Qualitative

The popularity of quantitative research has never waned since 1985 when Gomez (1993) declared it the dominant method in his review of 219 DevCom research studies from 1985-1990. Dominant was survey (43%), followed by multiple methods (19.6%) and quasi experiments (16.9%). Likewise, the dominance of the quantitative method, particularly survey, was observed again in Librero's (1993) review of 91 DevCom research reports. In 2012, Librero continued his watch of DevCom research production, focusing on 32 dissertations at this time, and he noted the continuing popularity and dominance of descriptive research anchored in quantitative methodology.

Has the quantitative method maintained its reign since then? Examining graduate researches since 2008-2015, the quantitative method has been continually employed as means in gathering and analysing data, but qualitative method has been levelling closely with the dominant paradigm. As reflected in Table 4 below, seven out of 19 masteral theses employed the quantitative method (36.84%), particularly survey. Results were interpreted through the use of descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages. Though quantitative method was dominant in MS theses, there were six (6) attempts at doing qualitative (31.58%) and mixed method (31.58%).

Table 4a: Method used in MS Theses 2008 – 2015

Methodology	Specific methods	MS Theses N=19	
		Frequency	**%**
Qualitative	Case study, interview field observation, storytelling and focus group discussion	6	31.58
Quantitative	Survey, interview, descriptive case study	7	36.84
Mixed methods	Quantitative: survey Qualitative: case analysis, interview, focus group discussion and exploratory	6	31.58

Similarly, the dominance of quantitative method is also evident in 16 doctoral dissertations. Table 4b below shows that eight (8) researches employed quantitative method (50%) while five (5) explored qualitative using mostly thematic analysis, case studies and few narrative approach. The remaining three (3) applied mixed methods.

Table 4b: Method used in PhD Dissertation 2008 – 2015

Methodology	PhD N=16	
	Frequency	**%**
Qualitative	5	31.25
Quantitative	8	50
Mixed methods	3	18.75

Though the findings confirm the historically-rooted popularity of quantitative method among DevCom researchers, it also shows that qualitative method is gradually making its ways, levelling with the dominant approach. The result is a welcome development for Gomez (1993) as he recommended that students have to explore also qualitative studies "using ethnographic methodology and interpretive approach" (p.58). Likewise, Librero articulated very well his challenge to explore a qualitative type of research as it goes deeper in analysis, "sufficiently sophisticated and more rigorous" (p. 238). Although he admitted that quantitative method is important, Librero (1993) asserted that there are situations that cannot be quantified, thus the need for qualitative research.

Summary and Conclusion

After analysing 35 DevCom researches produced from 2008 to 2015, majority still subscribes to Cybernetic tradition and is closely followed by the Socio-Psychological tradition. DevCom cannot

completely change its course yet, as it is still anchoring on what it used to study, communication flows, processes and links between the different elements of any social system. Also, the field cannot simply do away with using research to effect behaviour change, as evidenced by researches from the Socio-Psychological tradition.

It follows that major theoretical frameworks used are grounded on theories that come from Cybernetic and Socio-Psychological traditions such as General Systems Theory, Diffusion of Innovation, Communication Flow and Behaviour Change theory. However, theories that are interpretive and critical in nature are gaining ground as a considerable number of researches applied lenses from critical, socio-cultural, and semiotics traditions.

In terms of Quebral's DevCom typologies, majority of researches are into People Research, trending since 1960s as spotted by Gomez (1993). While people research has remained popular, Policy-oriented research is gaining momentum as interests in institution building, communication systems, its structures and functions in organisations are peaking up.

Meanwhile, the assessment of researches using Colle's Devcom threads revealed that extension research, which had defined DevCom works in the 1960s, is still very popular among the new breed of researchers. However, Institution Building and Community Participation Research, which has influenced DevCom works since the 1980s, have also attracted researchers. It is also worth thinking that despite the emergence of ICTs and new media platforms, DevCom researches have not tapped into the popularity of such technologies, dwelling instead on studies that concern the immediate stakeholders.

The popularity of quantitative method has never waned, as it remains the favoured approach among the new breed of researchers. Despite the continuing reign of this approach in DevCom, the interpretive rigour of qualitative method has been attracting scholars, as evidenced by its growing number closely matching those of the quantitative.

There were very few researches though on theorising. This has also been one of the challenges posed by Librero in 2012, but has barely transpired in both the Masters and PhD researchers. Overall, results revealed that research concerns have not changed that much in DevCom graduate studies since 2001 as most of the graduate works from 2008-2015 carried more or less the same: problem identification, description of a phenomenon, evaluation of the role of communication, communication strategies in an organisation and the likes.

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