Internal communication and its importance in the formation of the organizational culture of the *Ser Pilo Paga* Program[1]

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Abstract

This article presents the results of a mixed methodology research, focused on analyzing the incidence of internal communication with students of the first two cohorts of *Ser Pilo Paga* program in the formation of their organizational culture at the National University of Colombia.

The most significant results, the prevalence of unidirectional downward flow in University communication to its students is rescued, along with the lack of knowledge and disinterest in the search for mechanisms to promote the promotion of information and relate to their peers. This establishes interaction forms where the members refer to responsibility as the distinctive value when it comes to representing themselves, stimulating the individual commitment to academic performance over the construction of links with the university community.

Key words: University communication; Organizational culture; *Ser Pilo Paga* Program; Universities; Communication and development.

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1. Introduction

Ser Pilo Paga is part of an initiative between the Ministry of National Education of Colombia and ICETEX[4] since 2015, which aims to promote access to higher education to young people with low socioeconomic conditions that had high test scores. *Saber 11*[5] through the granting of forgivable credits (créditos condonables[6]); with them, the entire value of the student's tuition (estudiante adjudicado[7]) is covered every six months and resources are allocated to support part of their personal expenses; likewise, the universities have used these resources to execute with their Pilos students the objectives that each one determines in an independent way but maintaining the guidelines of the program.

One of the institutions of higher education in which this program operates is the National University of Colombia. In its Headquarters in the city of Medellín, the students belonging to *Ser Pilo Paga*a in their first two cohorts[8], only differed from the regular students at the beginning of their careers by obtaining the economic benefit offered by the program, since the activities of psychosocial intervention started at Headquarters from the University Welfare system at the end of 2016. With this characteristic, the ideals constructed before entering, as well as the social imaginaries and meanings that came from relationships in the family environment to be part of the program, was the support that contributed to the configuration of the sense of being Pilo both in moments before entering the University and the beginnings of his university career, due to the absence of an official communication about the program directed from the University towards this student population in order to address issues beyond the information component regarding to the fulfillment of procedures and administrative requirements of the awarded parties.

By not planning a communication strategy with the members of the *Ser Pilo Paga* program, nor implementing any special intervention of a psychosocial or academic nature directed to this population since the beginning of its operation in 2015, there is a lack of awareness of the ways in which internal communication has affected the beliefs, identity and values of such students (components of their organizational culture), and how these are represented from their interactions with the University.

In this way, this article presents the results of research aimed at answering the question about how internal communication affects the formation of organizational culture in the

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4   ICETEX is a state entity responsible for granting Colombia educational credits to promote higher education to people with good academic performance and economic needs.

5   These tests have been carried out in the institutions of secondary education of the Republic of Colombia for students of the eleventh grade, in charge of monitoring the quality of the education of the educational establishments of the country and checking how the competences of the students who finish the secondary education (Ministry of Education, 2016).

6   Being Pilo Paga, as a forgivable credit, finances 100% of the value as long as the student finishes his / her career and obtains the professional title based on the time conditions that each version establishes in its guidelines, otherwise the credit must be canceled for the student and his family.

7   Each version of Ser Pilo Paga has variations in scores and features to select its members, which are determined in the operating manuals of each cohort.

8   Versions 1 and 2 of Ser Pilo Paga started in 2015 and 2016, respectively.

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members of the *Ser Pilo Paga* program of the National University of Colombia (Headquarters in Medellin). Based on the approach of internal communication and organizational culture as central units of analysis and within the framework of the program, we sought to identify the characteristics around meanings, beliefs, values and behaviors, to establish the effects of internal communication on their organizational culture.

2. Methodology

To address this research, a mixed methodology was carried out, also known as complementary or integrated, multimodal or multimethod approach (Blanco & Pirela, 2016), carried out in two phases oriented towards an exploratory/analytical scope, whose data were analyzed from frequency distribution and hermeneutic triangulation.

For this process, the population of students assigned to *Ser Pilo Paga* (264 participants) in its versions 1 and 2 at the Headquarters of the city of Medellín of the National University of Colombia, distributed in the 5 faculties and the 26 undergraduate programs was considered. Likewise, there was the participation of 6 Headquarters workers (psychologist, communicators, University Welfare teacher advisor and administrative staff).

2.1. Quantitative phase

In the two cohorts that operated at the end of 2016 (versions 1 and 2 of *Ser Pilo Paga* corresponding to the years 2015 and 2016 respectively) there was 264 Pilos (students) enrolled. With this, the sample calculation was performed for finite population:

$$n = \frac{N*Z\alpha^2*p*q}{e^2(N-1)+Z\alpha^2*p*q}$$

Thus, with a total population of 264 Pilos of the first two versions of the program at the National University, Medellín (N), at least one sample of 133 individuals (n) had to be selected to calculate an expected proportion of 5% (p, for which q = 0.95) with an accepted error (or precision) of 6% (e) and a confidence level of 95% (Z, where Zα equals 1.96).

With these considerations we counted 134 Pilos who were administered a structured survey of Likert scale of 13 items, identifying elements around internal communication and organizational culture.

2.2. Qualitative phase

In order to approach the unit of analysis on Internal Communication, it was asked about the generalities of the communication within the Headquarters and the *Ser Pilo Paga* program, the communication flows, the participation in the communication processes, the function of the communication, the contents, the annals of information and the way in which the information is presented. In front of the Organizational Culture analysis unit, the interviews focused

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on being a *Pilo* student, around sub-categories such as: beliefs before and after entering the University, identity, values, norms, expectations, interactions, participation, sense of belonging and observations against the program of possible members in future cohorts.

In order to identify the characteristics of the internal communication, a non-probabilistic sample was defined, based on the interests of the research, as well as the 6 *Pilos* students who were selected based on their interest in participation and variety in their demographic characteristics. Academics, other key informants participated as professionals in communications, in psychology, heads of area and managers with the execution of activities directed to Ser Pilo Paga at the Medellin Campus of the National University of Colombia.

3. Conceptualization

3.1. Internal communication

Internal communication has been occupying a preferential place in organizations based on their interest in managing elements that intervene in the construction of their identity and reputation (Palencia-Lefler, 2008, Preciado-Hoyos & Etayo-Pérez, 2014). It is the component that allows the flow of information, generate a sense of community from the interaction between the members of the organization and contribute to the proper understanding of its mission. To do so, it reduces uncertainty and rumors, positions its members as the foundation on which its strategies are carried out, aligns the goals that individuals and the organization can have, reinforces the psychological link and contract between the organization and its members, and a climate of trust is generated from the interactions that transcend the merely informative act (Verghese, 2017; Karanges, Johnston, Beatson, & Lings, 2015; Constantin & Constantin, 2015; Ordeix, 2009; Tkalac, Verčič & Sriramesh, 2012). All this involves intentions and transformations in the representations of the subjects as agents within a reality that is constructed (Fajardo, 2009; Saladrigas, 2005).

This communication involves intra-organizational tools where interaction with their public is generated from the available means; however, Šárka (2014) has highlighted the efficiency of face-to-face interactions for the achievement of the objectives of internal communication due to the construction of trust, interaction and immediate feedback, involvement of several senses in addition to the visual, spontaneity, balanced dialogue to avoid monologues, and impact from the involvement of emotions. This is an issue that, after the rise of digital media, not only transforms, but also leads to questioning the clarity of the delimitation between the internal and external aspects of organizational communication, as well as the challenge of integrating these media for the relationship, the achievement of the objectives and the future of the organizations (Verghese, 2017; Moreno, Molleda, Athaydes, Suárez, Herrera & Álvarez, 2017).

In this way, the commitment of the collaborators is crossed by internal communication by promoting identification with the organization, knowledge of their role (clarity in functions,

support, performance, voice) and articulation with the strategy, goals and values (Wills-Espinosa, Cevallos, Sadi & Ancin, 2017; Verghese, 2017; Ruck & Welch, 2012; García, 2009). For this, internal communication is a means of management that transcends the maintenance and transmission of information that takes place in the areas, departments or people of organizations, as the relationships that occur within it go beyond the informative event. (Ordeix, 2009). In the words of Herranz, Tapia & Lázaro: "It is an element that allows the organization to unite, live and propagate a culture that is the basis for being able to integrate the values, mission and philosophy of the organization in the daily work" (2009 , p. 263).

Bearing in mind that communication is a fundamental fact in relationships, and even a vital resource (Bartoli, 1992), which becomes more complex as it involves social subjects such as organizations, institutions or governments (Tapia & Matellanes, 2009), Internal communication seeks to improve productivity and establish links of participation among its public, facilitating interactions between members of the organization by establishing relationships based on a sense and a value (Karanges et al., 2015). Thus, the effectiveness of this communication is a prerequisite for a reputation and positive image of the organization with internal and external audiences, an intangible resource that contributes to its success and greater positioning (Mazzei, 2010).

The organizations, in addition to informing their members of the instructions, reports and procedures of the daily work, through communication, invest in the intangible capital that allows the coherence, unity and congruence of the organization based on participation mechanisms towards a common project. In this way, the creation of a team is vital when it comes to guiding communication in organizations, since it is integrated, dialogue and identity are constructed from the shared values in daily activities (Herranz et al., 2009). Beyond the sending of information from one part of the organization to another, the importance lies in allowing the relationship between its members, giving rise to consider the voice of each of them in order to share, discuss, contextualize and clarify the information ; for this, it enables spaces of trust and interaction between individuals as active agents in the commitment and decision making based on the balance of interests, and intervened in the organizational climate, (adequate information, openness, participation and support in senior management) (Ordeix, 2009; Bartels, Peters, Jong, Pruyn & van der Molen, 2010).

The needs of organizations and their members are made visible through communication, so that organizational functioning depends on the interactions that are possible and limited within them (Varona, 1994). Defining and sharing objectives, organizing to solve problems, putting ideas in common and facilitating transformation and change, are actions permeated by communication where the participatory place of the members of the organizations is considered and valued, which makes of internal communication a complex and challenging issue for organizations that goes beyond the issuance of information.

Thus, internal communication in universities is a subject that has been addressed, either around the recognition of the importance of strategic planning in this type of complex organizations, either from the perception of their image by their public, or also of the impact of the bidirectionality of the communication by the diversity in the levels

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of information of the internal university publics involved in the communicative processes (among the teachers and among them with their students), as well as in the information channels that take place in these organizations. Likewise, the variables of satisfaction with internal communication and organizational commitment are highlighted (Herranz et al., 2009; Palencia-Lefler, 2008; Mortan, Vereş & Suciu, 2010; Tapia & Matellanes, 2009; García, 2012; Wills-Espinosa et al., 2017). However, these studies focus mainly on the employment relationship that occurs in higher education entities from the link with workers and not from contact with students and other members of the university community. Agents that promote, in the same way, the construction of meanings around the experiences and expectations of life in the university.

Regarding this issue, the importance of internal communication in higher education institutions is recognized to contribute in training, in the sharing of values and in the consolidation of organizational identity; this "[...] is an imminent task within the framework of the universities, if in truth they want to develop and, from them, preserve, develop and disseminate culture as a response to their social order" (Tapia & Matellanes, 2009, p. 129). In addition, for the strategic use of internal communication where interpersonal relationships and face-to-face communication stand out, the culture of the organization is of the utmost importance for the development of its communication; with this we recognize the relevance, for these organizational matters, of symbolic interactionism and the construction of meanings (between subjectivities) in the understanding of communication processes for the establishment of strategies and the selection of their tools (Sebastião, Zulato & Trindade, 2017).

3.2. Organizational culture

When considering that culture "[...] develops in any community of individuals that interact and relate to perceiving objectives, interests, beliefs, values, routines and shared needs" (Rodríguez, 2009, p.6 9), the conceptualization around Organizational culture is intertwined with communication and internal interactions, because in the most visible component of their culture are observable behaviors and relationships, which account for less visible levels such as values and beliefs, issues belonging to the members of the organizations (Rodríguez, 2009).

Likewise, recognition of the organizational culture is essential when diagnosing and proposing communication strategies (Sebastião et al., 2017), since it is from within the organizations where their communication is developed, prepared and established, starting from relationships with employees and co-creation of meaning through communication. This, because "[...] without the understanding of symbolic conventions, rituals and group values, the interpretation of messages is compromised, as well as the construction of meaning" (Sebastião et al., 2017, p. 865).

Culture, from the point of view of Geertz, is a system of symbols and collective meanings with which individuals interpret their experiences and guide their actions (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1992; Gonnet, 2012; Cuerda & Bonavía, 2017). That is, the importance of the meanings those individuals attribute to the interactions and events that are part of their

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organizational daily life. In this way, the organizational culture has the capacity to create systems of symbols and meanings that are largely shared by its members and that serve "[...] to interpret and give meaning to the subjective experiences and individual actions of the members, as well as to request or rationalize their commitment to the organization" (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1992, p. 21).

This is how the organizational culture, from the review made by Pérez (2009), is responsible for accumulating experiences from the evolution of its history, defining the limits of actions and the identity of each organization, which assigns a sense of identity for its members. It also contributes to the generation of a commitment that transcends the individual act of each collaborator, which acts as "[...] social glue that helps keep the organization together" (Pérez, 2009, p. 190), starting from its rules regarding the actions of its members. This author ends by highlighting, for the culture of the organizations, the function of guiding their projections and strategies, as well as operating as a mechanism of control against the attitudes and behaviors of the members.

In organizations, values, norms and expectations are shared from different structures that articulate the ways in which their past is linked to the definitions that are imposed by the dominant actors, and with the interpretations of the members, the decodifications of the actions and organizational interactions (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1992; Sebastião et al., 2017). The last aspect, which highlights the interpretations aroused by the interactions, gives an account of the subjective construction of the organizational reality and gives the actions the value of determining the senses attributed to situations, as a network of meanings in constant construction, which is of great importance in organizational symbolism by privileging the interpretation and understanding of experiences by members of the organization and how these shared meanings take place and relate to internal activity and interaction with the surrounding environment (García, 2006; Smircich, 1983; Leyva, 2007; Gonnet, 2012; Tomàs & Rodríguez, 2009; González, Ochoa & Celaya, 2016).

Culture, as an object of interdisciplinary study, has been approached from various disciplines, is closely related to the success, recognition and productivity of organizations (Vieira-dos Santos & Gonçalves, 2018). Thus, one of the aspects in which it has been studied, the Cameron & Quinn model, defines the culture in each organizational context based on its flexibility and orientation, whether internal or external. With this it is pointed out that in organizations, as contradictory systems, the characteristics of these variants are intertwined to give rise to the organizational reality and their culture, either focusing on the cohesion of their individuals and relationships (in change and adaptation), to the environment, in the maximization of results from the clarity and definition of the objectives), or in the respect of order, rules, hierarchies and formal relations based on the security and stability of the organization.

On the other hand, Cuerda and Bonavía (2017) think about the organizational culture from three aspects proposed by the Cooke & Lafferty questionnaire in the Organizational Culture Assesment Inventory, in them are: constructivist cultures, which focus on encouraging interaction between members through mutual support, integration and cooperation; the passive-defensive cultures, where the members seek not to feel threatened, satisfying the

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authority from the approval, the dependence on the hierarchies and the avoidance of errors; and, finally, aggressive-defensive cultures, which seek to maintain organizational status by promoting competitiveness, aggressiveness and independence of members.

In addition to these theoretical proposals that differentiate the types of culture of organizations, there is an important component when it comes to articulating culture from the subjective construction of the realities of the members of the organization; component that for Smircich (1983), is represented in the organization as a culture and not as something that she possesses, since it is a construction that crosses the history and experiences of each of the members that comprise it (Pérez, 2009). In this way, culture is a dynamic component that, as an external variable, is permeated by the cultural patterns that members bring from the outside, just as it is transformed from the subjectivities and interactions that take place in its interior for all the members that make it up.

Although the organizational culture is supported by many investigations, these are usually addressed mainly from areas such as administration, human resources and psychology rather than from organizational communication (Ruiz & Naranjo, 2012). This shows that this category is an issue that is not usually considered as a strategic element in universities articulated to communication; this is indicated in studies such as those of Abadía & Vaca (2013); Rope and Bonavía (2017); Roca (2012); Tomàs & Rodríguez (2009); Marcone & Martín (2003); Fernández (2002); Ortega-Sierra, Vergel-Ortega & Gómez-Colmenares (2014); Espinosa (2014); García, Hernández, Vargas & Cuevas (2012); Vargas (2011); González, Ochoa & Celaya (2016); Cújar, Ramos, Hernández & López (2013); Tomàs (2009); Tomàs et al. (2001). However, some studies such as Leyva's (2007), locate internal communication in universities as an interdependent element of their organizational culture, proposing the qualitative methodology as a basis for diagnosis, planning, organization and execution.

From the above it is derived that communication is mediated and mediated to the organizational culture, as well as to other organizational and social processes. It makes possible, among others: the process of information, dissemination and strengthening of culture (Leyva, 2007; Saló, 2008; Scheinsohn, 1993); operate as a management tool, with the tasks of unifying the image and identity from the internal public; provide instruments, strategies and actions to the organization; enable understanding between senior management and employees by articulating their interests, expectations and needs; and promote success based on the establishment of differentiating factors with competition and obtaining competitive advantages (Rosales & Moreno, 2009, Álvarez-Nobell & Lesta, 2011).

4. Results

The student population, despite being among the public considered most important for the University, is the one with which less communication has been established, since the downward flow of this has been privileged in a massive way from the institutional mail, the main means for contact from all agencies and even other locations in the country, using exclusively

institutional content from a formal language and a unified image. From this perspective, communication focuses mainly on the transmission of information, in order to meet organizational objectives, although this unidirectional action is opposed to feedback, dialogue, understanding and change (Wills-Espinosa et al., 2017).

For the *Pilos*, the means used by the program to communicate with them were considered adequate at 87.3% (responses of 4 and 5 on the 5-point Likert scale), with clear information presented in 78.4%, and interesting and useful in 73.1%, as shown in table 1. From the email and interpersonal contact established during the intervention activities, the students gave greater importance to discard the contents (directed by the program) or messages they reported on institutional situations (communications from other faculties, condolences, messages about heritage, or topics from the university that did not fit the characteristics of the students as their careers or the semester in which they are). Messages that were ignored or deleted without prior reading due perhaps, also by data collection. The information coming from other university dependencies has been considered of little value, except for the subjects enrolled and other academic subjects; thus, both students and professionals and communicators appreciated that the institutional mail was a medium that was saturated.

Table 1[9]
Comunicación descendente del programa *Ser Pilo Paga*

	1 (Little)		2		3		4		5 (Much)	
	n	%	N	%	N	%	n	%	n	%
Relevancy of the means	1	0,7%	5	3,7%	11	8,2%	65	48,5%	52	38,8%
Clarity of information	1	0,7%	3	2,2%	25	18,7%	62	46,3%	43	32,1%
Interest and usefulness of information	1	0,7%	4	3%	31	23,1%	67	50%	31	23,1%

The dynamics established gave rise to consider that dialogue was not the main element of communication between the University and the students. It seems that the role was established as that of passive recipients of information, which has fostered their little interest in finding ways to interact with their peers or superiors. This is how upward communication has been considered one of the important aspects to be taken into account in future scenarios of the University, because of the few official mechanisms available for its effective flow, since it is an aspect that has depended mainly on the initiative of students to look for how to establish contact with higher entities. In this way, the intervention activities have taken advantage of the face-to-face interaction to obtain immediate feedback, although this depended on the participation of the students in the *Ser Pilo Paga* program, subject limited by the availability of time or their interest to attend.

9   The five tables presented are of own elaboration.

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The expression of opinions and needs of students was affected by factors such as ignorance of the mechanisms that the University had for it or its use, disinterest in publicizing their opinions, pessimism about whether the information could generate changes, or caution to be considered revolutionaries or generators of problems if they expressed themselves openly. This is reflected in the comfort of the *Pilos* to make their ideas or needs known to professionals, so the perception of opportunities to convey opinions in an ascending way, is established as an important element when referring to the relationship between the communication and organizational commitment (Wills-Espinosa et al., 2017). See table 2.

Table 2
Upward communication of the *Ser Pilo Paga* program

	1 (Little)		2		3		4		5 (Much)	
	n	%	N	%	N	%	n	%	n	%
Comfort in expressing ideas	2	1,5%	18	13,4%	45	33,6%	50	37,3%	19	14,2%
Feeling of attention and listening	4	3%	12	9%	37	27,6%	45	33,6%	36	26,9%
Disposal perception	0	0%	2	1,5%	9	6,7%	51	38,1%	72	53,7%

Regarding horizontal communication (of the *Pilos* among themselves), the relationship between the *Pilos* students, was defined far from camaraderie, fellowship and sense of community; the established interactions were mainly framed in the utility obtained when requiring immediate information on the administrative procedures of the program that could save contact with higher entities. Thus, the horizontal and ascending communication that was established with and between the *Pilos* from the administration of the program was clearly informative about the formalities of *Ser Pilo Paga*, ICETEX and the Colombian Ministry of Education. See table 3 below.

Table 3
Upward and horizontal interactions of *Pilos* students

	Hardly ever		Few times		Sometimes		Many times		Almost always	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Interaction with the professionals	46	34,3%	55	41%	19	14,2%	12	9%	2	1,5%
Relationship with other Pilos	44	32,8%	44	32,8%	28	20,9%	15	11,2%	3	2,2%

According to the *Pilos*, the communication of the University with them was not different from that established with the regular students, except when the topics were exclusive of the program in administrative matters. To this is added the fact that both the program and the University have not known, in detail, about the communication that has flowed between the *Pilos*, since no official channels have been established, or informal media have been fed, to propitiate its interaction and, with it, the cultural aspects that are nourished from it as cohesion and identification (Peña, Caldevilla & Batalla, 2017).

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However, the importance that the *Pilos* students granted to the fact of belonging to the program focused on the economic benefit of the credit, since social recognition emerged and remained in their family and personal environment. Because in the university they were considered ordinary students, who could present difficulties and academic flaws like the others, this recognition was not reinforced from the interactions that were fostered there.

The feeling of pride, in this case, was an experience fundamentally supported in the family context for having been beneficiaries of a -state scholarship- (naming it repeatedly in this way instead of "forgivable credit") and, although it was not something they expressed openly to the university community, these feelings and the recommendation of the program for other students were significant aspects in their speeches. However, being proud to be part of the program, have been affected by the beliefs, prejudices and issues that have crossed the social context of the country, where criticisms were expressed regarding the operation of the program in terms of the resources that the State they direct to private universities that have Ser Pilo Paga students, which host the largest number of students assigned to this program and receive a large part of the resources.

Thus, although students may feel proud to be *Pilos*, due to the implications in the family and social imaginary that represents having received a -state scholarship-, some of them have preferred not to mention openly within the University their membership in the Program; this, for the prevention against the stigma and the possible signaling that the social imaginary entails, where the individuals related to the *Ser Pilo Paga* program can be considered as part of the problem in the inequitable distribution of the country's public resources, a matter that has been questioned from different spheres the objectives of this initiative of the National Government of Colombia.

On the other hand, the economic scope has been the most significant advantage for the *Pilo* as a member of the program and is also a reason for its disadvantages in terms of concerns about the possibility that the credit becomes a debt for their families. With this, being *Pilo* has been crossed by fears of various kinds: indebtedness, breaking family-built ideals, being recognized over other students, worries about events that force them to fall behind in semesters, feeling the wrong career, not receiving the sooner half-yearly subsidy, to be able to contribute to families with this money, among others. Thus, belonging to the program was considered a greater responsibility than that acquired by regular students, since academic performance was directly associated with the economic consequences.

When considering that during the first academic semesters the execution of the program was not counted as actions for its members, its identity is affected since it is configured within the University in the same way as regular students. In the surveys conducted only 36.6% of the Pilos consider themselves to be in an important group of the University because they belong to the program (See Table 4), an identification that affects the ability to commit themselves organizationally and, with it, the interest on the part of the collaborator in helping to achieve the objectives of that organization for which they feel affection, attachment and obligation of correspondence (Wills-Espinosa et al., 2017).

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Table 4
Sense of belonging to the *Ser Pilo Paga* program

	Hardly ever		Few times		Sometimes		Many times		Almost always	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Feeling of exclusivity	23	17,2%	39	29,1%	23	17,2%	32	23,9%	17	12,7%
Feeling of proud	4	3%	15	11,2%	34	25,4%	39	29,1%	42	31,3%

The expression *Ser Pilo*, which refers to the academic abilities of an outstanding student, was put into question when the program members recognized that some of them had low academic performance, reflected in the Accumulated Weighted Academic Average (PAPA), calculation of the academic life that is fundamental to establish the maintenance of student quality; In this way, good performance was not a common denominator that justified the construction of their identity. Thus, in cases of low academic performance, the pride of belonging to the program became a concern for "surviving" and the desire not to have decided to be part of it.

Membership in the program has been limited mainly from the economic benefit of the credit, underestimating the socialization with other *Pilos* and aspects such as the feeling of unity or familiarity with their peers, the disposition of interpersonal interactions and the meaning that transcends the family and the economic. With this, the availability of time to participate in the activities convened by the program, which also were not compulsory attendance, was evaluated negatively in 67.9%, so the little interest in participating in them derives from considering that they did not represent a direct benefit in terms of academic or economic performance.

Table 5
Participation in the activities of the *Ser Pilo Paga* program

	Hardly ever		Few times		Sometimes		Many times		Almost always	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Time availability	44	32,8%	47	35,1%	29	21,6%	10	7,5%	4	3%
Interest in participation	13	9,7%	36	26,9%	44	32,8%	30	22,4%	11	8,2%

5. Discussion

One of the fundamental aspects when analyzing the impact of the internal communication of the *Ser Pilo Paga* program on the formation of its organizational culture were the dynamics generated by its communication. The predominance of the flow of the descending communication, the knowledge of few mechanisms for presenting the ascending communication, the little interest in promoting it by its members, as well as the low horizontal contact between its students, gave rise to the configuration of organizational dynamics promoted by the cha-

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racteristics of their interactions and socialization, since: "The study of communication in an organization reveals important cultural keys and the ways in which it originates and persists" (Leyva, 2007, p. 8).

The descending communication, directed vertically from upper rooms to those lower in the organizational hierarchy (Bartels et al., 2010; Wills-Espinosa et al., 2017), being the most basic forms of communications in organizations, handles the transmission of information, instructions and orders for its proper functioning and the fulfillment of the mission and objectives, showing what is valued and important for the management on the members of the organization. These messages, in addition to being truthful and clear, must contain interesting information for the public, since from its flow it tends to the management of the organization and the transmission of its culture (García, 2012; Rodríguez, 2009).

From the vertical axis, communication allows the identification with the organization, contributes in the establishment of hierarchical positions and the commitment with the information associated with the organizational strategy from the top management, as well as allows the participation of the members of its baseline for decision making when the rise of communication is achieved (Bartels et al., 2010). This is how upward communication, if not promoted openly from *Ser Pilo Paga* to its members, cannot fulfill its functions when it comes to directing the voice from students to higher stays, because the exchange is limited, the alternatives for the resolution of problems, the identification of collective representations and the commitment of the members of the organization (Constantin, & Constantin, 2015).

When a style of communication is oriented in the achievement of tasks from the issuance of information, repetition and fulfillment of functions (Cabra, 2008), more than generate an exchange of messages and knowledge, is dedicated to dissemination above interpersonal communication (Šárka, 2014), so participation and democracy are scarce when centralization is reinforced due to the absence of feedback (Preciado-Hoyos & Etayo-Pérez). With this communicational characteristic, "[...] the most probable thing is that the manager has a distorted image about the reality of the organization, since in the absence of ascending communication the understanding of the contents that are disseminated is not verified" (Preciado- Hoyos & Etayo-Pérez, 2014, p. 427). This affects the perception that the Ser Pilo Paga program could have of the members, their experiences and representations, as well as the reasons why their objectives were fulfilled or not.

The participation and commitment of *Pilos* students were affected by the ignorance of their experiences, opinions and representations, because the upward flow is the promoter of dialogue with superior stays, making their members feel like protagonists of the organization and a vital part of its cultural evolution, considering it as its own and preventing it from being seen as something alien and imposed from higher stays (García, 2012; Capriotti, 2009), since internal communication establishes a close link with the commitment built by the members of the organization with his work, which goes through beliefs, affections and actions (Tkalac & Pološki, 2017).

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Horizontal interactions have the potential to promote the development of affective bonds, share relevant information, and contribute to participation, support, internal cohesion and the joint construction of meanings and realities (García, 2012). However, due to the scarcity of interest and mechanisms for interaction in this sense, in the program, communication privileged institutional contents, program guidelines, activities and their regulations; thus, horizontal communication replicated the relevance of this information for *Pilos* students (Bartels et al., 2010). This characteristic gives rise to questioning the role of communication in being responsible for "[...] creating, consolidating and maintaining good relations among those involved" (Peña, Caldevilla & Batalla, 2017, page 317), because the interactions few, applying guidelines of Tkalac & Pološki (2017), do not allow the identification or cohesion of the members of *Ser Pilo Paga* around the program, being the opening of communication channels, constant feedback, initiatives and information sharing between peers and superiors, vital elements for organizational commitment.

The organizational culture, a fabric of meanings that is dynamically reconfigured from the interactions, is permeated by the participation of its members as the way to exercise power, solve problems, promote dialogue and analyze the collective (Leyva, 2007; Scheinsohn, 1993). In this way, seeing the organization as a culture (Smircich, 1983) and, in agreement with the thought of Ordeix (2009), when establishing its communication towards the *Pilos*, from them and among them, the prioritization of their role in around the reception of institutional content and not that of being agents and producers of interactions with which wider and more complex meanings would be produced that would not be supported in the mere informative act.

Thus, the identity configured within the organization is intimately related to its communication, from organizational behavior, design or visual presentation and organizational communication (Bartels et al., 2010; Herranz et al., 2009; Cardoso, 2000); so in the case of *Ser Pilo Paga*, its members built it, from the unidirectional verticality, a scenario in which the reception of information focused on the administrative requirements of the program or in the call for its activities, something similar to the communicational behavior of the rest of the regular students.

In the organizational culture of *Ser Pilo Paga*, the responsibility towards the academic guidelines when relating to the economic implications was the main value that was articulated with the practices, beliefs and ideals of its members, updating itself with the built or limited relationships (Etkin, & Scvarstein, 1992; Rodríguez, 2009) and reflecting how they should relate, how power was exercised, how to act and from what to adapt (Pedraza, Obispo, Vásquez & Gómez, 2015).

With this, cooperation, fervent beliefs about social responsibility or the productivity and efficiency of the program were not stressed, but the establishment of detailed steps, requirements and compliance with organizational mandates, giving account of a consistent and hierarchical culture (Toca & Carrillo, 2009). With these characteristics, the organizational culture of Ser Pilo Paga is distanced from constructive characteristics where the interaction between the members is motivated to achieve the objectives through mutual support and cooperation (Cuerda & Bonavía, 2017). Here the passive-defensive component is highlighted in

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which the members focus on the follow-up of norms coming from higher entities, waiting for the initiative to be taken by third parties and predominating behaviors in search of approval, dependence and avoidance. This gives rise to think about the culture of the program oriented to the follow-up of rules and instructions that reaffirm the importance of hierarchies, beyond relationships, adapting the articulation of the members to achieve the objectives.

6. Conclusions

Internal communication is a mechanism of the organization to enable not only the flow of information among its members, but diversity in the dynamics of interaction that are established between them, which is articulated with the representations that build on their ability to participate, the degree of activity that has its role and the image that is produced as a whole of the organization.

Presenting in a premeditated way or not, both communication and its apparent absence promotes the image that the individual constructs of himself, of others, of the organization and its relationships, providing tools to guide their behaviors and know their limits. The elements of an organization regarding its communication are aimed at establishing relational possibilities that configure the members to represent themselves as members with a role within the organization and thus be able to build links from the interactions that the communication flows allow or restrict.

This is how the features of organizational communication underpin the establishment of relationships and representations around the students assigned to Ser Pilo Paga at the National University of Colombia, Medellin Headquarters, because the communication that they perceived and conceived, was oriented to reaffirm their role within the university community and the program, prioritizing behaviors, identifying with values and raising beliefs about the forms of relationship that founded the work of the Pilo student in the university context. All this was made possible and strengthened by the dynamics that communication established from its contents, media, flows and actors, and it was commissioned to promote an image around its organizational culture that is constantly updated, modified or strengthened based on the dynamics that communication makes it possible.

In this way, there are evidenced characteristics within the organizational culture of the *Pilos* where dialogue, participation, active interaction and the construction of meanings and experiences with the university community are not highlighted, since the individual academic performance that affects directly on the economic responsibilities that the credit establishes. With this, the culture and communication of the organization are interdependent elements that feed and strengthen each other, because communication is the manifestation and step to the act of beliefs, values and thoughts that sustain the organizational culture.

Ser Pilo Paga, as a national program that has been linked to the dynamics of each university, can think about the role of its members beyond its guidelines, presumptions and desired image, and can also focus on the place that its members occupy at the time to be agents in

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the communicational process, arriving at establishing objectives based on their realities and those of the universities, because the beliefs, values and identities that are configured around the interactions within the organization and the program are evident with their transition to the act of communication as a process.

This is how this research generates openness to future study scenarios, both in other universities where *Ser Pilo Paga* operates and in similar programs, in order to know and understand the representations constructed from the communicational characteristics of students as actors of these processes. This, in order to generate reflection and analysis about the role of these programs in society and its usefulness for the needs that arise in the context that the country is going through, since with this approach it has been glimpsed that Ser *Pilo Paga* is a complex network of experiences and representations that requires in-depth studies, transversality and multidisciplinarity to promote a complete program of social transformation.

In addition to reaffirming the close relationship between communication and the culture of organizations, this study allows us to question the way in which internal communication involves all its members, opening the panorama when it comes to involving students as actors and participants in the rise, maintenance and transformation of the communicative and cultural processes of the universities, giving rise to the studies carried out in these complex organizations to inquire about the role and repercussions of these relations around the knowledge and development of the organizations, because research focused on internal communication and the organizational culture of the university sector, such as the works of Herranz et al., 2009; Palencia-Lefler, 2008; Mortan, Vereş & Suciu, 2010; Tapia & Matellanes, 2009; García, 2012; Wills-Espinosa et al., 2017, were studies that tend to be mainly concerned with the labor relations of their employees without highlighting the student's role in the construction and deconstruction of meanings and their culture.

This is how communication becomes a mechanism that generates possibilities, both for universities and their programs, to encourage or limit the fulfillment of mission objectives with their members, from which identifications are generated not only by the contents, but by the manifestations made in the communicative act, by the ways in which the interactions of all those involved in this process of inevitable interaction are dynamized. This locates the programs that operate in the universities from their different dependencies, as an object of study to question the role of communication in the achievement of the objectives.

Universities and their programs emerge as future research scenarios that invite the resolution of new concerns that can be addressed in a multidisciplinary way based on the interactions between the actors involved and the representations that arise from their communication. The public or private nature of higher education institutions, the functioning of *Ser Pilo Paga* based on state resources, the guidelines of each cohort of the program, the variety of experiences of the *Pilos* students regarding their programs, the differences between the universities at the time of executing the same program, the prejudices and stereotypes that are built in society about the projects within the educational institutions, as well as the particular context that crosses the country, are some of the many elements that may differ at the time to generate new concerns, prompting to formulate future discussions to think how communication is

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involved at the time of building an organizational culture based on the relationships and representations of the members, waiting to be an active part of the process of construction and transformation of the meanings that they give rise to the formation of their own realities.

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