



UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

Exploring the impact of training and development on employee's retention

A case study at INOVA+

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Católica Porto Business School
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Resumo

Atualmente, o mercado de trabalho é extremamente competitivo, tanto para as empresas como para os trabalhadores. Por um lado, as empresas esforçam-se cada vez mais para não perderem os seus melhores talentos para outras ofertas externas mais atrativas. E, por outro, os trabalhadores procuram ofertas de emprego que vão além de um bom salário. Por conseguinte, a retenção dos colaboradores tornou-se um desafio contínuo requerendo à empresa que invista em novas técnicas para que o trabalhador se sinta valorizado e motivado. A formação e o desenvolvimento tornaram-se uma das ofertas chave da organização, a fim de aumentar a motivação e o desempenho dos colaboradores, e consequentemente aumentar a retenção dos mesmos.

A investigação apresentada resultou de um estágio curricular realizado na INOVA+. O objetivo desta investigação é explorar as perceções dos trabalhadores da INOVA+ sobre o valor da formação e do desenvolvimento na retenção dos mesmos. Para esse efeito, foi utilizada uma metodologia de estudo de caso, com entrevistas semiestruturadas realizadas com dez trabalhadores da INOVA+. Neste sentido, examinámos três pontos-chave nesta pesquisa: razões que influenciam a intenção dos colaboradores de permanecer na empresa, as perceções das diferentes práticas atuais de formação e desenvolvimento da INOVA+ e o seu impacto nos colaboradores e na organização e as perceções dos participantes sobre o impacto da formação e do desenvolvimento na retenção dos trabalhadores. Finalmente, após análise dos resultados, são dadas algumas recomendações de melhoria à empresa no final do relatório.

Deste modo, este estudo de caso permitiu recolher informações detalhadas sobre as práticas de formação e desenvolvimento mais valorizadas pelos trabalhadores que operam em empresas de consultoria e se estes aspetos influenciam a sua decisão de permanecer na empresa.

Palavras-chave: Formação, Desenvolvimento dos colaboradores, Satisfação e motivação no trabalho, Retenção de colaboradores.

Abstract

Nowadays, the labour market is extremely competitive, both for companies and employees. On the one hand, companies are trying harder and harder not to lose their best talents to other more attractive external offers. And on the other, employees are looking for job offers that go beyond a good salary. Therefore, employee retention has become a continuous challenge where the company must invest in new techniques to make the employee feel valued and motivated at work. Training and development have become one of the organizations key offer in order to increase employee's motivation and performance, with a view to increasing employee retention.

The research presented resulted from a curricular internship carried out at INOVA+. The aim of this investigation is to explore the INOVA+ workers' perceptions of the value of T&D on employee's retention. To that end, a case study methodology was used, with semi-structured interviews conducted with ten employees of INOVA+. In this regard, we examined three key points in this research: reasons influencing the intention to stay, perceptions of the company's current T&D different practices and their impact on the employees and the organization and, the participant's perceptions on the impact of T&D on employee retention. Finally, after analysing the findings, some improvement recommendations are given to the company at the end of the report.

Overall, this case study allowed to collect deeper information on the most valued training and development practices for employees that work in consulting companies and if these aspects influence their decision to stay in the firm.

Keywords: Training, Employee development, Job satisfaction, Motivation, Employee retention

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Introduction

In an increasingly competitive market based on a greater dependence on knowledge and high skill levels, it becomes a priority for companies to invest in their human capital (Sieben, 2007). Employee's training and development (T&D) have become one of the most valuable practices a company can adopt to retain their employees and has been shown to provide numerous advantages for a company and its various stakeholders (Grugulis, 2010). In this sense, there are several different types of training and types of employee development activities that have been associated with a positive effect on the performance, attitudes, and motivation of individuals and teams (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Kraiger et al., 2004) and that can have a positive impact in retaining employees (Dietz & Zwick, 2020).

Nevertheless, to adopt training and employee's development programs that have a clear impact on retention, it is important that companies take into consideration what motivates and increases the satisfaction of their workers towards the training or employee development program (Kraiger et al., 2004) including their own perceptions of the importance of that program (Tsai & Tai, 2003). It is in this regard that for many years, researchers have explored the impact of the different training and employee development characteristics on employees and how they influence the worker's decision to stay or leave the firm (Dietz & Zwick, 2020; Koster et al., 2011; Lee & Bruvold, 2003).

The present investigation was conducted during a curricular internship held at INOVA+, a consulting firm that specializes in assisting the growth of other companies. The main aim of this research is to analyse the perceived value of T&D on employees' retention from the people operating at INOVA+ by conducting semi-structured interviews with the firm's employees that explore the reasons influencing their intention to stay, their perceptions of the company's

current T&D practices and their overall impact and, their perceptions on the impact of T&D on employee retention.

While many previous studies have addressed the positive influence of T&D in retaining workers, there is still research that can't prove that investing more in T&D leads to increased employee retention (Brunello & De Paola, 2009). Hence, we intend to reduce this literary gap in the literature by addressing the following questions in our research:

- (1) How does employee development and training affect employee's intent to stay?
- (2) How does employees perceived continuous development and training influence their motivation, satisfaction, and performance?

Following this introduction, this report is structured in four chapters. First, in Chapter 1 the literature on the subject is reviewed, which includes the relevant theoretical background and key concepts. Then, Chapter 2 presents the methodological approach adopted to carry out this study, a contextualisation and description of the company and the data collection process. Chapter 3 analyses the main results of the ten semi-structured interviews conducted in this case study. Finally, the report ends in Chapter 4 with a discussion of the results, conclusions, recommendations for the INOVA+ company and limitations and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

In this chapter, we review literature about employee's training and development (T&D) and its impact on employee retention. We start by analysing the different types of training and the different types of employee development methods. Next, the impact of training and development on employees is studied, more specifically, how their satisfaction, performance, and loyalty towards the job and the company vary. Then, we discuss the connection of training and development with employee retention, including the analysis of the model concerning the portability, credibility, and visibility of training. To conclude, the chapter ends with understanding how this model can be used to explore the impact of training and development on employee retention in the case study.

1.1 Defining training and development

Nowadays, most organizations provide training and development options to their employees in order to increase their knowledge, skills and motivation and consequently gain competitive advantage in the more and more globalized market.

In these past few years, the nature and objectives of work have changed and training and development has been through a radical and continuous transformation. Noe et al. (2014) analysed over 450 articles published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* and came to the conclusion that the definition of training and development has come a long way over the past one-hundred years, but one thing is clear, there is both an organizational and personal imperative to better explain and understand how humans learn on the job and how to better develop, implement and support training and development activities.

In that regard, employee's training and development has proven to have countless benefits for an organization and its multiple stakeholders. Training and development can have a positive impact on the employee's salary, increase their value in the company while opening doors to new and more high status jobs and can even lower the probability of losing their jobs (Grugulis, 2010). According to Grugulis (2010) there are also perks in investing in training and development for employers, including the decrease of their dependence on the external labour markets because the company will train their employees with the necessary skills instead of searching for new people. There is also a general acknowledgement in the literature that companies that invest in training are more successful because it affects the organizational performance (Kraiger, 2003). Further on, Aguinis and Kraiger, (2009) stated that there is a positive effect of training on all levels of an organization: individual, team, organizational and social.

First, it's fundamental to differentiate training from development. Training is a planned effort to make the employees learn job-related knowledge, behaviour and skills while development is related to improving the employees ability to meet the challenges of new or existing jobs by obtaining the skills, behaviour and knowledge necessary for that purpose (Noe et al., 2006). According to Aguinis & Kraiger (2009) development is also connected to practices that allow the acquisition of new knowledge and skills for the purposes of personal growth.

Although training and development practices are one of the most relevant aspect to motivate the employees and helping them gain new skills and competences in the work environment (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Tsai & Tai, 2003), many case studies regarding training and development forget to mention that these factors are a derived demand which means that the primary purpose of a company is not providing the best training possible but to make a profit and deliver a service or a product (Grugulis, 2010). This author, Grugulis (2010) makes reference that there are different types of jobs that require different types

of training, while in some businesses it's necessary to have a highly skilled workforce with specific abilities and a wide number of competences, there are jobs with strict routines that are based on automating work. And so, the skills that the employees need to have to do these routinizing jobs are more concrete, limited and restricted to a specific task. Some jobs don't have the same level of responsibility.

Therefore, to proper continue to analyse the specifics of training and development is necessary to differentiate the various types of training and development.

1.1.1 The different types of training

The different types of training can be described according to the portability of skills (Becker, 1962), the source (Cooke et al., 2005; Galanaki et al., 2008), the training needs and objectives (Noe et al., 2006) and according to the content of the training (Grugulis, 2010).

In his article about the investment on human capital, Becker (1962) made the distinction between general and specific human capital training in a perfect labour market. He classified general training as training that provides general and portable skills that can be useful with any employee and increase the productivity of a worker in other companies besides the one which is providing the training. Contrarily, specific training increases only the productivity of the company that provides the training.

By assessing these two types of training, general and specific, it's clear to see that when an employee receives general and portable human capital training their outside options and their labour market value increases. In addition, the outside companies can offer better pay than the training firm since they don't have to recover the investments of that employee's training (Loewenstein &

Spletzer, 1999; Stevens, 1994). And so, the company that provides general training is at risk to lose their trained employees to other firms (Black & Lynch, 1998; Mohrenweiser et al., 2019). Further ahead, it will be explored, in more detail, the relation between training and development and personnel turnover.

Whether a company is training their employees on general or specific skills, they can choose to provide in-house training or use an outside expert to develop a training course. In fact, training is one of the most outsourced HRM functions (Cooke et al., 2005; Galanaki et al., 2008).

The decision to choose from in-house or “contracted out” training is of the utmost strategic importance and because there are benefits associated with both options, this choice must be carefully examined. According to Galanaki et al. (2008), the firm’s decision on outsourcing training includes an implicit choice between a short-term and long-term method to training assets. The author states that some companies lack the internal capacity to provide the necessary training and that’s why they prefer to outsource, however in the long-term this can result in the hiring of an external training firm that fails to meet the company’s initial requirements and expectations.

In general, despite the fact that the cost of buying outsourced training can vary, it is more expensive to buy specialized training that requires specific material and knowledge than to participate in a course that teaches general and portable skills (Noe et al., 2006).

Noe et al. (2006) also state that it’s necessary to ensure that the training content is directly related to the training needs and goals. For this reason, trainers must decide between the different types of training methods: presentation, group-building and hands-on methods.

The presentation methods are when employees are receiving information provided by others like in workshops or lecturers, while the hand-on training

methods are more related to when the trainees are putting their skills into practice (Noe et al., 2006). An example of this can be the on-the-job training type. Moreover, when trainees learn more about the other participants, share experiences and ideas in group discussions or team-building moments, the company is applying a group-building training method (Noe et al., 2006).

As many studies have claimed, not all training is equal, it can vary based on type, quality, precision, work description, and necessary skills. The training that companies invest and employees require depends on the needs of the work people do, because not all jobs are knowledge-based nor do they need specific skills to be performed (Grugulis, 2010).

Grugulis (2010) focused on analyzing skill levels instead of activity levels and classified training by content. Therefore, the author puts forward a framework that categorizes four different types of work-related training: developmental, information and communication, soft skills, and administrative.

Developmental training promotes the enhancement of work-related skills and emphasizes on the individual employee's contribution to the company. However, training in soft and social skills is more focused on changing or developing employee's feelings and behaviours towards customers. These two types of training are the ones that have the potential to impact the employee's pay, promotions and levels of responsibility within the organization.

According to Grugulis (2010), administrative training doesn't affect the way enterprises compete nor is focused on the employee's individual skills. On the other hand, this type of training is more related to activities like health and safety, and other content that is useful for employees to know while operating in the company. The information and communication training content is helpful to brief workers about what is happening in the company such as initiatives or legislation and office changes.

The administrative and information and communication types of training are very important and necessary for companies to properly operate, but they are not linked with an employee's skill development (Grugulis, 2010).

Finally, Grugulis (2010) argues that although there is an increasing number of people in training programs and developing new skills, this opportunity is being wasted by companies since more and more employees are finding these skills under-utilized in the workplace.

1.1.2 The different types of employee development

Employee development is one of the most relevant aspects of human resources management. Many authors confirmed that when a firm invests in their workers' development, by shaping their attitudes and behaviours, they are also developing the capabilities of the entire organization (Huselid, 1995; Lee & Bruvold, 2003; Whitener, 2001).

Taking into consideration the previous definition of employee development, Noe et al. (2006) categorize employee development into four different methods: formal education, job experiences, assessment, and interpersonal relationships.

Formal education includes a wide variety of employee development programs such as short courses provided by external companies or educational institutions, Master of Business Administration (MBA) programs, workshops, and more (Noe et al., 2006). The author also affirms that the most common way to provide employee development is through job experiences and learning new skills that are normally not related to the worker's job description.

Assessment is also an employee development approach that allows companies to give feedback and share their opinions with their employees about their behaviours and attitudes in the workplace through performance appraisals, questionnaires, evaluating exercises, and more (Noe et al., 2006).

Finally, Noet et al. (2006) say that employee development and skills can also be developed by using the interpersonal relationship approach and allowing workers to learn more about the organization by interacting with a more senior and experienced employee. Examples of this are mentoring or coaching programs.

Table 1 summarizes the different types of training and the different types of development discussed previously.

Types of training	According to the portability of skills (Becker, 1962)	General training
		Specific training
	According to the source (Cooke et al., 2005; Galanaki et al., 2008)	In-house training
		Outsourced training
	According to the training needs and goals (Noe et al., 2006)	Presentation approach
		Group-building approach
		Hands-on methods approach
	According to the training content (Grugulis, 2010)	Developmental training
		Information and communication training
		Soft skills training
		Administrative training
	Types of employee development	Development approaches according to Noe et al. (2006)
Job experiences		
Assessment		

		Interpersonal relationships
--	--	-----------------------------

Table 1: The different types of training and development

After exploring the different types of training and employee development, it's necessary to analyse in a more detailed way the effect of these approaches on the worker's motivation, satisfaction, and performance.

1.2 The impact of training and development on employees

There is a documented evidence that training and development activities have a positive effect on the performance, attitudes, and motivation of individuals and teams (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Kraiger et al., 2004).

Training portrays a key role in developing two main sources of competitive advantage. The first is its human capital (Raghuram, 1994; Zwick, 2006) and the second it's the organizational knowledge and skills (Tsai & Tai, 2003).

According to previous literature, training has been strongly associated with performance (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Barrett & O'Connell, 2001; Bartel, 1994; Huselid, 1995; Kraiger et al., 2004; Tsai & Tai, 2003).

Barrett and O'Connell (2001) studied if the incidence of training matters to the overall performance, using the percentage of employees involved in the training programs as a measure. They found out a positive relationship between a company's performance and training incidence.

Other authors studied the impact of training time on performance levels, using the employee percentage of training hours as a measure (Huselid, 1995) or the year that the training was implemented (Bartel, 1994). Both of these studies found

that the time allocated to training has also an effect on the overall firm's performance.

Besides, according to Barrett and O'Connell (2001), general training has a notable positive effect on productivity and performance however the same relationship is not found for specific training.

Even though there is evidence of the presumed positive effect of training on the firm's performance, there is still a high number of companies that still doubt this relationship and that is because they don't measure the impact of training on performance (Kraiger et al., 2004).

Training has benefits for different levels of an organization, but to collect these benefits the firm must conduct a needs assessment of the employees' skills, focus on pre-training stages, the transferability of training and the training delivery to make sure to invest in the right type of training (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). Therefore, the companies who are more aware of the importance of training and even invest more resources in training programs can experience better results (Aragon & Valle, 2013).

Furthermore, Kraiger et al. (2004) states that the reason many organizations still link training with several performance issues is that the training decisions are based on an old and dated assessment or someone's perceived wrong understanding of a performance problem.

Investing in employee development has been proven to have an impact on the company's productivity and also increasing the worker's satisfaction towards the job and commitment to the firm (Lee & Bruvold, 2003). Noe (1986) affirmed that variables like employee's motivation and attitudes can play an important part in reaching training effectiveness and stated that even though employees have the capability to acquire the knowledge taught on the training and

development sessions, they might lack the motivation to collect the benefits from training.

Others also argued that the capability of the employee to learn the content portrays a smaller role than the motivational variables (Colquitt et al., 2000), so to achieve training effectiveness is more important to guarantee that the trainee is motivated and not just assure that they have cognitive ability to acquire the knowledge and skills.

Mathieu et al. (1993) suggested that the trainees' level of training motivation is influenced by environmental factors such as financial support, resources, and tools. Other studies concluded that as employees perceive that the training is important to reach their objectives their motivation towards the training increases (Tsai & Tai, 2003).

Moreover, Tsai and Tai (2003) explored the difference between forcing employees to attend training and letting employees voluntarily choose to attend training programs. They found out that mandatory training assignments lead to a higher perceived importance of training, thus leading to an increase in a trainee's motivation. Therefore, to increase employee's perceived importance of training and training motivation, the organization should previously provide their trainees with information about the contents to be learned to increase training familiarity (Colquitt et al., 2000) and indicate their expectations towards the training assignments (Tsai & Tai, 2003).

1.3 Training, development, and employee's retention

One of the most important consequences of T&D is employees' retention, the topic explored in our case study as discussed in the next chapters. The first reference about training and development influencing employee retention comes from the human capital theory. Becker (1962) explored the impact of training on

employee retention by distinguishing between general and specific skills training, in a perfect labour market. The conclusion was that general skills training can increase the productivity of workers not only in their current firm but also in other establishments. Therefore, the human capital theory states that companies will not pay for general training since these outside firms can propose a better offer as they did not have to invest in the actual employee's training (Becker, 1962).

When employer's training and development provide skills that are useful in other firms, meaning general skills, this can add to the market value of workers and contribute to an increase in employee's turnover (Loewenstein & Spletzer, 1999) since other firms will try to poach trained workers (Black & Lynch, 1998). On the other hand, Loewenstein and Spletzer (1999) state that when companies invest in specific training, employees become more valuable to the current firm and even creates a positive effect on employee retention.

However, the monopsony theory states that there are a number of labour market frictions or imperfections that explain how a company can retain their employees and still provide them with general training skills (Acemoglu & Pischke, 1998, 1999b). The theory supports that asymmetric information about an employee's abilities can avoid their decision to leave the firm (Acemoglu & Pischke, 1998). Also, training visibility is one of the factors that can explain this effect. When a firm provides training that is easy to access and visible it can increase the employee's motivation towards the training and eventually affect their decision to stay in the firm (Acemoglu & Pischke, 1998). Therefore, labour imperfections might transform portable human capital into non-portable human capital (Acemoglu & Pischke, 1999b; Becker, 1962; Loewenstein & Spletzer, 1999).

In addition, labour market imperfections can have an impact on wage distribution which means that companies can get higher rents from employees

that are equipped with new skills and invest more in their workforce (Acemoglu & Pischke, 1999a).

Another perspective is explained by Sieben (2007) that states that by investing in training and the development of employees, the retention effect increases. And so, when a company invests in the development of employees skills this generates a positive image that the organization is willing and interested in giving training opportunities and support the growth of their workforce, making employees believe that they have to reciprocate this investment made by the company and entering in a social exchange relationship (Koster et al., 2011; Lee & Bruvold, 2003). This social exchange theory is proven by Koster et al. (2011) that found out that when a company invests in general training this considerably contributes to the perceived support in workers' capabilities and increases retention.

As we can observe in the literature, there is evidence that a firm's commitment to their workforce's personal development has a positive effect on the employee's job satisfaction (Georgellis & Lange, 2007; Koster et al., 2011; Lee & Bruvold, 2003). This happens because a psychological contract is made between the company and the employee in which the worker feels emotionally attached to the company and consequently, more satisfied and motivated (Georgellis & Lange, 2007).

Therefore, when workers perceive that their employers invest in their training and development this leads to higher satisfaction levels and an increase in employee retention (Koster et al., 2011; Sieben, 2007).

In this line, Kampkötter and Marggraf (2015) stated that employees do value and reciprocate the company's investment in their development, but it's necessary that companies are aware of the degree of reciprocity of their workforce to choose the most suitable practices and training and development

options. Also, the author, contrary to the human capital theory, affirms that general training has a positive retention effect, especially for recently hired employees (Kampkötter & Marggraf, 2015).

1.3.1 The portability, credibility and visibility of training and its impact on retention

As previously stated, Becker (1962) expressed the necessity to differentiate general from specific skills to evaluate the retention effect. He observed that since general skills can be portable to other companies, the firms that invest in this training can risk having their employees poach from them (Black & Lynch, 1998), but when the company provides specific skills training this will only benefit the employee inside the training firm since the skills acquired are not portable to other organizations (Becker, 1962). Therefore, non-portable or specific training can have a positive impact on retention (Loewenstein & Spletzer, 1999).

According to the monopsony theory, visible training provided by training certificates also has a negative impact on retention (Acemoglu & Pischke, 1998) and affects the portability of general human capital training, by transforming portable human capital into non-portable human capital (Acemoglu & Pischke, 1999b). Other authors also show that the differences in training portability and visibility that are normally not controlled in previous studies can have an impact on retention (Dietz & Zwick, 2020).

Dietz and Zwick (2020) found out that training portability and visibility reduce the employee retention effect of training independently. In addition, when visible and portable training contents are provided and certified by an external organization this has an even stronger negative effect on retention since the external certificates are more credible than certificates given out by the employee's own firm (Dietz & Zwick, 2020).

However, and considering the above information, Dietz and Zwick (2020) conclude in their empirical paper that training continues to be a capable measure to retain qualified employees. They state that even general/portable, visible, and credible training has a positive effect on retention, which can be explained by the positive influence of training and development on the employee's satisfaction and attitudes towards the job (Dietz & Zwick, 2020; Koster et al., 2011; Lee & Bruvold, 2003).

1.4 A case study: Exploring the impact of T&D on employee retention

After a literature review of the main concepts required for the study, the aim is to explore the retention effect of training at INOVA+. This will be done taking into consideration the human capital and monopsony and social exchange theories, the impact of training and development on employees' motivation and job satisfaction, and the effect of training portability, visibility, and credibility in retention.

As suggested by literature, T&D can have a positive impact on retaining employees (Dietz & Zwick, 2020; Koster et al., 2011; Sieben, 2007). However, there are still studies that can't link training to higher employee's retention (Brunello & De Paola, 2009). This can be explained by uncounted labour market frictions such as training visibility (Acemoglu & Pischke, 1999b; Dietz & Zwick, 2020) that many studies don't account for, and this leads to contradictory conclusions. Taking this into consideration, the objective of the case study is to reduce this literary gap in the literature and analyse the perceived value of T&D on employees' retention from the people operating at INOVA+.

Given the high importance and benefits of retaining employees, this study will have an important contribution to future literature and research because

INOVA+ is a growing innovation company that has been suffering, like many others trying to stay in the game, with low retention levels with more and more workers choosing to leave to pursue better opportunities. This study will explore if INOVA+ employees value training and development options and if it influences their decision to stay or leave the firm. Finally, since INOVA+ is a company that operates in different areas and has a wide range of employees with different backgrounds and skills, the worker's motivations to stay in the firm might be different from the ones explored in previous literature.

Regarding the motivation on the part of the company in carrying out this study, it intends to analyze its training and development methods and how these are related to its employees' decision to stay or leave the organization. In this sense, we will assess employees' perceptions of the different types of training they receive, including positive and negative aspects, to understand what influences their decision to stay at INOVA+.

Chapter 2: Methodology

In the present chapter, the research methodology adopted to carry out this thesis will be presented. The research questions, the objectives and the advantages of the methodology used will be analysed. Thus, the company where the study was developed will be characterised, and the entire associated data collection process will be described.

2.1 The adopted methodological approach

This report intends to study the relationship between providing employees with training and development options and how does that affect their decision to stay in the firm, by analysing the perceived value of T&D on employee retention from the people operating at INOVA+. Thus, this study addresses two research questions:

- (1) How does employee development and training affect employee's intent to stay?
- (2) How does employees perceived continuous development and training influence their motivation, satisfaction, and performance?

Both research questions are of the "how?" typology and capture the essence of what we are interested in answering with this report while still leaving open the context and the nature of the relationship between the variables under study. This only reinforces the option taken to conduct a case study at INOVA+ (Yin, 2012).

It should also be noted that this method was chosen to analyse a specific situation, how INOVA+ employees perceive the value of T&D in employee retention, in order to create awareness within the company that can cascade into

action to provide more training and development options to their employees to decrease the high turnover that is happening in consultants such as the aforementioned one.

To study this case, the adopted methodological approach was of a qualitative nature. Qualitative research is characterized by describing and understanding social and human problems through behavioral analysis (Creswell, 2013). This qualitative approach is a descriptive technique that allows the interviewer to identify the subject from the perspective of the participant and to understand their perspective and behavior about the context in the case (Hennink et al., 2020). Differently, the quantitative method tends to aim at testing hypotheses by linking different variables and is based on statistical procedures (Creswell, 2013). Although there is a possibility to use a mix-method approach that incorporates both the qualitative method and the quantitative method in a single research study (Williams, 2007), this research only uses the qualitative method.

The decision to use only the qualitative research method is based on the fact that the objective and research questions of this report aim at understanding the point of view of the participants, their actions and their perceptions of the value of T&D on employee retention. Moreover, using this method is important to refer that the interviewer analysis of the data is somehow subjective as it seeks to analyze the meaning that the participants of this study give to their own experience (Hennink et al., 2020).

Inside the different qualitative research methods, including the ethnography study (common culture where the researcher emerges in the daily life of the participants), the grounded theory study (abstract and general theory of a process based on the participant's views), the phenomenological study (a study that tries to answer the question of the experience) the content analysis study (designed to interpret different characteristics and patterns in the human communications) the case study approach was the chosen one (Williams, 2007).

Beyond the reasons stated previously, the case study approach is better suited for this report because the main purpose is to analyze in depth a limited number of individuals' perceptions and connect them with the literature (Creswell, 2013; Hennink et al., 2020).

According to Yin (2003) a case study should be considered as the right approach when the participants of the study cannot be influenced or their behavior manipulated and the aim of the research is to answer "how" questions. Case studies can be categorized as descriptive (describe a phenomenon), exploratory (explore a situation or a phenomenon based on data collection and research questions) and explanatory (very complex and detailed data analysis to explain the phenomena) (Zainal, 2007).

Therefore, the most appropriate case study type for this report will be exploratory because the objective is to explore if providing employees with T&D options affects employee retention (specific phenomenon) based on the data collected from the INOVA+ employees. Besides, this chosen methodology emphasizes the advantages of conducting the internship at the company, because it allowed the interviewer to gain more in-depth knowledge of the participants and the company (Crabtree & Miller, 1999).

2.2 Characterizing INOVA+

This case study was developed in the scope of a curricular internship carried out at INOVA+, *Innovation Services S.A.*, with a duration of six months. The internship was conducted in the international department, more concretely in the Capacity Building unit that specializes in partnerships for cooperation and development of innovation competencies for education. It should be pointed out that the case study was not conducted specifically within this department but among the various divisions of the company in question.

2.2.1 Description of the company

INOVA+ is a Portuguese company, founded in 1997, specialized in supporting the growth of organizations through innovation, international cooperation, access to funding, and digital transformation, and making them a key player throughout the innovation cycle.

The company is present in four countries, namely Portugal, Belgium, Poland, and Germany, and counts more than 100 employees from different backgrounds and nationalities. Besides, with more than 20 years of experience in European funding programmes and success in this area, INOVA+ collaborates, on a regular basis, with various international bodies, and with the European Commission for the development and implementation of projects and services.

Moreover, the INOVA+ portfolio includes various companies, start-ups, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), scientific organizations, and public entities. With this wide and multi-sector network of contacts and partners, INOVA+ assumes itself as a key player throughout the entire innovation cycle of the Research and Development projects.

The company operates in three main sectors: consulting, digital and international. In the area of consulting, they provide to the three customer segments - corporate, scientific, and institutional - customized and specialized services in tax, project management, public funding, and business innovation.

In the digital division, the company has its own Research and Development department where they can develop, design, and implement applied R&D projects, in different technical and scientific domains. They also develop Information and Communication Technology solutions in various fields and support the digital transformation process to help the development of new projects, tailored to each organization's specific needs.

Finally, the international unit has access to an established European network of partners and is responsible for coordinating international projects in various fields. In this division, INOVA+ differentiates itself from other companies by developing competitive applications and coordinating high-impact innovative projects. They offer solutions in the areas of international funding, science, and technology, capacity building, territorial cooperation, and give support to European Institutions. Apart from its business units, INOVA+ has five other areas, transversal to the whole organization: human resources, IT, finance, marketing and administration.

The company is a recognized entity for the practice of Research and Development by the Portuguese Ministry of Economy and Science, and it has a 30% success rate in European projects, making it the number one Portuguese SME with the highest number of approved European projects. In addition, the INOVA+ was recognized in 2020 as an SME Leader.

With the numbers of the company growing steadily, INOVA+ states that “the excellence of our service is based on a highly qualified team and on our investment in areas of specialization” (INOVA+, 2021).

Regarding the motivation on the part of the company in carrying out this study, it intends to analyze its training and development methods and how these are related to its employees' decision to stay or leave the organization. In this sense, one of the objectives identified is to assess employees' perceptions of the type of training they receive, including positive and negative aspects, and to understand what influences their intent to stay at INOVA+.

2.3 Data collection

2.3.1 Procedures

The following study, as stated before, was conducted during the internship at INOVA+, which started on 1 of October of 2020. It is important to mention that these six months allowed a more deep and fundamental analysis of how the company operates, including the compilation of the T&D programs offered to the organization's employees. In addition, these notes are crucial in understanding to what extent the intention of the employee to stay in the company is affected by the training and development options offered at INOVA+ and to be able to perform a contextual analysis of the data collected.

During the first months, the focus was mainly on revising the literature that served as a theoretical basis in the context of the present study. After, a script was structured to understand the employee's perceptions and opinions about the T&D programs available at INOVA+, and search for links between these training programs, that provide the workers with an opportunity to grow and learn new skills, with job satisfaction, motivation and performance, and explore how does it influence their intention to stay in the company.

When choosing the right qualitative procedure, it was taken into consideration the three qualitative research methods and the advantages and disadvantages associated with each (Hennink et al., 2020):

1. The in-depth interviews, where the purpose is to identify individual perceptions and experiences regarding the subject in case. To conduct these interviews, a script must be produced. This method allows the interviewer to gain in-depth information and analyze individual experiences and feelings, however, one must conduct multiple interviews to collect different perceptions on the same issue.

2. The focus group discussion approach aims at gathering a range of opinions about a certain issue, and so individual perceptions and experiences are not the objectives of this method. Although this discussion can help identify more issues faster and get a huge number of opinions, this is less suitable for collecting in-depth and individual information.
3. The observation method aims at understanding the context of how other people act and interact in certain situations. This method is helpful to identify the participants' behavior and support data from other theories. On the other hand, it's subjective since the interpretation of people's behaviors is the sole responsibility of the researcher.

Having said this, the chosen qualitative research method was the semi-structured, in-depth interviews, because the purpose of this case study is, as stated previously, to analyze the INOVA+ employees' perceptions. Therefore, it's clear that to conduct this case study we need to identify the individual perceptions of people working at the company to gain access to thorough information about the subject in question.

During an interview, the researcher usually follows a script of pre-prepared questions but can also deviate when needed to gather more useful information about the participant's perceptions (Adams & Cox, 2008). In addition, it's relevant to consider that the more structured the interview the less the respondent feels comfortable revealing important issues, and so it's important for the interviewer to be flexible with the order of the questions and let the key points flow from the discussion and make the conversation feel natural (Adams & Cox, 2008).

Since the objective of this case study could only be achieved by making the respondent feel at ease to answer honestly and disclose relevant issues, it was conducted a semi-structured interview and a list of questions was developed (script). Nonetheless, it is not imperative to follow the defined order of the script

and, if necessary, it's possible to add or remove questions depending on the interview and the interviewee's answers.

In order to apply this script and conduct the interviews, at the beginning of April, a meeting was scheduled with Dra. Marisa Rodrigues, who works in the Human Resources department at INOVA+, to explain the intention of these interviews, to try to clarify the intended sample and seek to gather the employees who would be willing and available to be part of this case study. This request was then forwarded to the company management to obtain permission to conduct this study.

Afterwards, each participant was contacted via Skype or Microsoft Teams to confirm their interest in being part of the study and schedule a time for the interview to take place. All the interviews were organized within 2 weeks.

Between April and May, the main objective was to conduct semi-structured interviews with INOVA+ employees. In total, thirteen interviews were carried out, however the first three served as pre-test interviews to make sure the script worked as intended and was understood by all the interviewees or if it needed to be adjusted (Hilton, 2017). The interviews lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes and they all took place in the space of 3 weeks. The interviews were all recorded, with the respondents' permission, and transcribed on the same day to ensure no details were overlooked. Of the thirteen interviews, three took place online, via Microsoft Teams and Skype, and the rest were conducted face-to-face at INOVA+ company premises.

2.3.2 The script

The script was developed with the objective of this case study in mind: to analyse the perceived value of T&D on employees' retention from the people

operating at INOVA+, while also searching for links between T&D options and job satisfaction, motivation, and overall performance.

When developing the script all the information and theories gathered from the literature review were taken into consideration, because the researcher must be informed about the subject he/she intends to explore in order to ensure that the interview is useful and that it addresses the questions relevant to the study (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Therefore, the script is divided into three main parts and each incorporates a theme to be covered during the interview to help lead the discussion to the subject this case wants to explore:

1. The first part of the script aimed at understanding the reasons why people at INOVA+ stay in the firm and why, in specific, the interviewee decides to stay in the firm and not pursue other job opportunities. It's important to mention that the participants of this case study were not aware of the objective of the case study prior to and during the interview so that we could evoke the fullest and most honest answers from the interviewees.
2. The second phase of the script was focused on training and development. The interviewees were asked to describe the most appreciated/positive and the most negative T&D aspects at INOVA+. In addition, they also were asked to elaborate on why they think those are the most positive or negative aspects and how they influence the employees' attitudes, satisfaction, performance and the organization as a whole.
3. The third and last part of the script joined the two issues discussed in the previous two parts: retention and T&D. The interviewees were asked to discuss their perceptions on whether the T&D options offered at INOVA+ influence people to stay in the firm. Also, before the interview ended, interviewees could make additional comments on the topics discussed during the session to make sure that no key information was forgotten.

Table 2 presents the structure of the script and questions associated to each part:

Structure of the script	Questions
First part: Employee retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reasons that make employees stay or leave the company. • The reason why the interviewee stays in the company and what makes him/her want to leave.
Second part: T&D at INOVA+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most positive aspects about T&D at INOVA+. • The most negative aspects about T&D at INOVA+. • Influence of the previously mentioned T&D options on the employees and the organization.
Third part: Relation between employee retention and T&D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interviewee's perceptions of the value of T&D in employee retention at INOVA+.

Table 2: Structure of the interview script

Previous research has found that pre-testing qualitative interview guides can be very useful to check if the interviewees understand the questions and are able to answer them without any complications (Hilton, 2017). Thus, the script was pre-tested in the first three interviews of this case study, however, it did not undergo any changes in structure as it achieved its intended purpose and participants could answer the questions without any difficulties. Nevertheless, these pre-test interviews served to assess the general quality and comprehensibility of the script.

As stated before, this script was applied taking into consideration the nature of these interviews. The semi-structured interviews are considered to be the best approach to efficiently gather information (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) and known to be flexible, therefore the order of the questions of the script suffered changes according to what each interviewee wanted to reveal and discuss about the subject (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Thus, the style, order, and timing of each question of the script were not always the same in each interview. The interview script is included in Appendix I.

2.3.3 Sample

When choosing the respondents, their seniority in the company was taken into consideration, because it is necessary to have an overview of the subject in question.

As stated previously, thirteen employees of INOVA+ were interviewed. The selection of the participants was made with the help of Dra. Marisa Rodrigues, who works in the Human Resources department, to facilitate the process and have a better idea of the employees who would have the time and willingness to be a part of this study. From the thirteen interviews, only ten were analysed and included in this report, since the first three interviews were used to ensure that the script functioned as planned and that all interviewees understood it, or if it needed to be modified.

Furthermore, of the ten participants, four have worked at INOVA+ for less than five years, three have worked there between five to ten years, and the other three have been with the company for more than ten years. The seniority of the participants in the company is only important to ensure that this case study gathers a wide range of perceptions and shows as accurately as possible the employee's opinions and feelings on the issue at hand.

The subject matter addressed is sensitive for the company and therefore the confidentiality of data retrieved was ensured at the beginning of each interview.

Chapter 3: Results

This chapter presents an analysis of the main results of the ten semi-structured interviews conducted in this case study. In this sense, the structure of the script will be followed to examine three focal points in this research: the reasons associated with the employee's intention to stay, perceptions of the company's current T&D different practices and their impact on the employees and the organization and, the participant's perceptions on the impact of T&D on employee retention.

3.1 Reasons associated with intention to stay

In the first part of the interview, the data collected allows us to observe how many of the interviewees mention T&D as a decisive factor in making their decision to stay or leave INOVA+.

Firstly, when asked about their opinion about what makes people in this company want to keep working there, most of the interviewees mentioned the pleasant and informal environment of the company, the closeness between employees, the career progression, the friendly atmosphere, and the flexibility. Only five interviewees mentioned the opportunities for employee development as a general important factor in the decision to stay at INOVA+. For example, some of the participants declared:

"(...) The main reason that makes me want to stay in this company is definitely the environment and the people. We all support each other and like to work together."

"(..) The company has always provided me with opportunities to grow and new challenges, no doubt this is the main reason for me to stay at INOVA+. Furthermore, I

feel that I can always ask for help from anyone I work with, we all get along very well, this is also a factor that makes me stay."

"(...) I believe that the flexibility and informality of the company are two very important factors that influence my decision to stay. If I must pick up my son or if I have a doctor's appointment, I have the flexibility to leave early."

It was mentioned that the company offers the chance to work in different departments and to learn new skills by offering diverse work opportunities. In addition, one respondent stated that there are on-the-job training and development opportunities for employees to learn new skills in various departments, however there is a lack of formalization of these processes. These factors are seen by some interviewees to influence the employee's intention to stay in the firm, as we can see in the following statements:

"(...) The company creates repositioning solutions between areas to meet employees' interests and their need to learn new skills. I think this is seen as a positive factor by the employees."

"(...) I believe the company is betting more on on-the-job training. Normally we have our most senior colleagues always available to answer questions and doubts on the spot. I think that the possibility that the company gives us to experience other departments and challenges is also highly valued by employees and positively influences the decision to stay at INOVA+."

Next, each interviewee was asked the reasons that make him/her specifically stay in the company. However, the reasons were practically the same as the ones stated in the previous question. Nevertheless, three participants mentioned some employee development practices like coaching and different job experiences, although they are not formalized in the company, as decisive factors in their decision-making process, as seen below:

“(...) For me specifically, without a doubt the coaching and support I feel from my colleagues are the main reasons why I want to stay in this company.”

“(...) I believe the reasons that influence me to stay with the company are the opportunities I have always been given to evolve and grow within the department. I have held very different positions to the ones I hold now, so I can experience various work functions and it never gets boring or monotonous.”

“(...) I don't believe there are any formalized development activities in my department; that is, we don't have a designated mentor assigned to each new employee. However, I believe that everyone that works with me on a regular basis contributes to my professional development, whether they are assisting me with a problem or providing comments on my work. This is one of the main reasons why I decide to stay in this company, and I believe it is the majority's too, as I mentioned in the previous question.”

When asked about the factors that would make them consider leaving the company, none of the respondents mentioned T&D. Most of the interviewees mentioned that the salary is not competitive while others stated that only external factors would make them think about leaving INOVA+.

In view of these results, we can say that although some interviewees consider development opportunities as an important factor in their decision to stay, they do not consider it relevant enough to make them leave if the company does not provide them. Furthermore, only one participant revealed on-the-job training as an aspect that influences employee retention.

It is important to state that not mentioning the subject of the case study to the interviewees was very important to gather the most honest answers possible to these initial questions. The aim was to see if they would refer to T&D as a decisive factor in employee retention and in their personal decision to stay at INOVA+, without being influenced by what we wanted to analyze.

3.2 Perceptions of the company's current T&D practices and their impact on the employees and the organization

In this second part of the interviews, the focus was on T&D and its impact on employees and the company. The interviewees were asked about the aspects that they most appreciate or consider most positive and the aspects they least appreciate or consider most negative about T&D at INOVA+.

The majority of the participants stated that the company doesn't invest a lot of time and money in training, however, they have seen a greater push for T&D initiatives in recent years. For example, one participant said:

"(...) I have been at INOVA+ for some years now, I have seen the company trying to invest more in training their staff, but I realize that it's not one of their priorities."

Even though, some training initiatives were mentioned by the participants such as:

1. Creative writing sessions are given by an external consultant for the staff working in the international project management departments.
2. Volunteer sharing sessions, provided by other, more experienced employees.
3. Administrative training about health (first-aid measures) and fire safety measures (how to operate a fire extinguisher).
4. Group-building sessions where the employees share important knowledge with each other.
5. On-the-job training is very common.
6. Certified training for learning how to use Microsoft Excel and other software used by the company.
7. Training on work etiquette.

There was a large discrepancy in the respondents' knowledge regarding these types of training offered by INOVA+. It was clear that not all employees knew about every training opportunity offered by the company and that some departments invest more in training than others. One of the interviewees proceeded to explain:

“(...) I am aware that there are areas where there is not so much concern for supporting and training employees. For example, there are areas with coaching programmes to integrate new employees, while in others there are no such processes. I believe that the first months are fundamental to train the worker and if there is no support from a more experienced employee, the new employee may feel lost and even discouraged.”

During the interview, the participants also referred to employee development initiatives in the company:

1. Mentoring and coaching programs for new co-workers. However, most of the participants stated that these activities are not formalized by the company, meaning that each department head decides whether or not to provide them.
2. The Human Resources Department always gives new employees a guided tour of the company's facilities and respective departments. During this visit, they explain how the company works, the objective of each area, and where to go if they have any questions.
3. There are regular assessment moments where the company shares questionnaires for the employee to evaluate his/her performance and attitudes at work. A meeting is then held with a human resources person and the head of the department to which the employee belongs, where the company's assessment and opinion of the employee over the period in question are shared.
4. Two participants mentioned that the company has sometimes invested in courses for specific employees (post-graduate studies, seminars, masters).

During the interviews, one of the respondents pointed out that the company only invested in external courses, such as post-graduate studies, on rare occasions, and that this investment was always accompanied by certain conditions. That is, if the course is very expensive, the employee must sign a contract in which he/she commits to staying in the company for a specific period of time. This respondent carried on saying:

“(...) I know there have been situations where people have asked the company to invest in their training and external courses and I know this has happened. Of course, there are trade-offs if the training is expensive. Honestly, I don't know if it is still possible to make that proposal to the company.”

Two participants mentioned that there is a budget allocated for employee training and development, however, it is often not used either because there is no time available to conduct these activities and sessions or because not all employees are aware of the existence of this fund.

There was a consensus that the company invests more in employee development than in training, and even less in training that is certified and visible to external companies. Also, it was communicated by the interviewees that when there are training activities in the company, these are of a more general type, that is, there have been very few times that the company has invested in training the employees with specific skills for their work. Although, there were two interviewees that stated that they have had more specific training than general training.

Some interviewees mentioned that they value the company's flexibility when an employee is currently pursuing a master's degree, or a postgraduate course and the company allows them to leave early and adjust their working hours.

One of the most common negative aspects indicated about T&D during the interviews was that there is no proactivity on the part of the company to refer to

new training or development activities that could be of value to the employee and improve the quality of their work. This is seen by many as a lack of interest by the company in its employees. In addition, six out of the ten interviewees pointed out that not having more specific training that meets the needs of the employee is seen as a major failure in T&D.

Besides, two participants mentioned that the company sometimes gives out questionnaires to the employees or schedules meetings with the objective of mapping their training and development necessities, but they never follow up on the responses, so this mapping process becomes a bit pointless. One interviewee, for example, shared his own experience by saying:

“(...) I have also had meetings with human resources about my individual career plan where they assess my training needs, however, there has been no follow-up on new training courses specific to those needs. As a result, this procedure is a waste of time.”

Most of the interviewees mentioned the management of T&D activities as the biggest weakness of the company since almost all training sessions are sporadic and are not communicated effectively. Moreover, each department works differently, some benefit more from specific skills development training while others only benefit from general training that is common to all departments, such as health and safety training.

During the interviews, it was also revealed that sometimes the HR department sends emails for external courses, such as lessons on financial subjects or language classes. It was clear that most participants do not consider this company practice relevant or positive for two reasons: these courses take place outside working hours and many employees do not have time to participate; the company does not suggest specific training or courses to each employee and most of the time workers do not know how to evaluate which training is necessary for their work and end up not enrolling in any. For instance, one respondent stated:

“(...) I would say that certified or external training is very sporadic. There is the dissemination of external training lessons that employees can attend, but alien to the company, they are often language courses and unrelated to the type of work we do. Also, these courses are normally outside of working hours and most of us don’t have time to attend.”

Subsequently, the interviewees were asked how these positive and negative aspects of T&D mentioned by them affect the company and the employees.

Most of the interviewees referred that the coaching programme developed by the company, although not formalised and without a defined structure, contributed a lot to the integration of new employees and to increase their levels of motivation at work. Even the sharing sessions, where more experienced employees give internal training to more junior employees are very well seen by the interviewees and they believe that they cause a great impact on the performance of the employees and consequently on the productivity of the company. As seen below, there was one participant that suggested that the company should have an initial week of training and development sessions for all new employees to make them feel more integrated and confident in their future tasks:

“(...) The company does not take the initiative to suggest training. Or, as in other firms, there are those first weeks dedicated only to training and development of employees, here there isn’t such a defined process. I would suggest that the company had sharing sessions or training and development courses for new and inexperienced employees during their first weeks on the job to help them feel more competent and motivated.”

Furthermore, six out of ten respondents said that T&D not only has an influence on employee performance, but they believe that the real impact is on employee loyalty and motivation. That is to say that when T&D initiatives are more frequent, employees feel that they are more valued by the company and

that the company wants to invest in their growth instead of going looking for new, more experienced employees in the market. For example, two participants declared:

“(...) This investment in training makes us feel valued as part of an organisation. And I think that’s what makes people want to stay and want to wear the company’s shirt... employees become more loyal and motivated.”

“(...) I believe that we are more motivated to work when we feel valued by the company. If the company invests in our training, it’s because it wants to provide us with new skills to perform the job in the long run, and because it believes in our potential. Of course, when the training is tailored to the employee’s specific development needs, it increases the levels of motivation even more.”

Participants also indicated that when a company invests in T&D, employees become more loyal to the firm. In particular, one of these interviewees went further and mentioned the concept of “psychological contract”, whereby the company's investment on T&D creates perceptions of support and loyalty and promotes employee retention:

“(...) When the firm invests more in training and employee development activities it will make the employees feel more motivated and satisfied in their jobs and it will make them want to perform better and stay in the company. On the other hand, the company only gains by having more motivated and higher performing employees. It’s a bit like a psychological contract and a win-win situation.”

When it came to the different types of T&D, some interviewees expressed that the general skills training does not actually increase their motivation towards the job. One respondent stated that it’s necessary to link the training or development activity with the necessities of each worker, so specific skills training will improve the performance of the employee and make him/her feel more valued by the company.

The interviewees shared that nearly all Inova+ T&D initiatives are voluntary and that most employees agree with this aspect since many do not have the availability to attend the sessions, however, two interviewees mentioned that some of these initiatives should be compulsory to emphasise their importance. On the other hand, another interviewee stated that it's important that the company gives employees the freedom to choose which T&D activity they want to participate in, otherwise the objective of the training may not be achieved, and the trainees will be unmotivated and unwilling to actively participate. For instance, one interviewee clarified:

"(...) The training is all voluntary, you are not obliged to participate. If it is important for a specific employee, the company may send an email to suggest and encourage the participation of that employee but does not demand it."

In addition, three out of the ten interviews stated that the company should invest more in outsourced and certified training because it will increase the motivation of the participants towards the training and development sessions. Nevertheless, there were four respondents who mentioned that the certification of training is not an important factor for them.

In short, all participants spoke of factors such as motivation, loyalty, performance, improved quality of work as the main effects of T&D on employees. Regarding the impact on the company, the interviewees mentioned increased productivity and employee retention as positive factors of investing in T&D.

3.3 Perceptions about the impact of T&D on employee retention

This final part of the interview aimed to analyse respondents' perceptions of the impact of T&D on employee retention.

In this part, some of the participants had already mentioned employee retention as a positive outcome of employee's T&D. Six out of ten interviewees stated that they think that employee development initiatives, such as coaching, mentoring or assessment meetings, contribute more highly to employee retention than training. They also agreed that employee development has a huge impact on integrating and supporting new and less experienced employees, and so, they considered that employee development can even have a more positive impact on retaining more junior profiles. According to certain interviewees:

"(...) I think it depends on the level of experience of the person... if the employee arrives at the company and feels that he's not accompanied and has no way of learning, of course, this can lead to him leaving. I definitely think training and development activities are more important for new and inexperienced employees."

"(...) Training is important for some workers but I think that employee development activities, like mentoring or coaching, make all the employees feel more supported and valued by the company, and increases employee retention."

"(...) Investing in the integration and development of new employees is essential for them to feel motivated and gain a good impression of the company. When I joined, I had this support, and it contributed a lot to my work performance. This all influences the decision to stay or leave the company, of course."

Some interviewees also mentioned that although T&D initiatives are important factors in increasing employee performance and motivation, they are not a decisive factor when it comes to their decision to stay or leave the company. Nevertheless, some stated that it's very important to continue learning new skills and progressing in the company, and when this is not happening, they may consider leaving. For instance, one participant shared:

“(...) Honestly, for me, training is important, but I don’t think it is the factor that influences my decision to stay or leave the company. I think that decision is more related to other factors.”

Moreover, four participants also shared that the certification of the training is not an aspect that they consider to be the cause that would make the employee change his decision to leave or stay, as we can see in the following answer given by one of the respondents:

“(...) I don’t think that it is the certification of the training that motivates employees to stay in the company. I think that when the company invests in the development and progression of the employee within the company, this does have a impact on retention.”

Most of the interviewees agreed that when training is person-centred, i.e., when they have specific training to develop the skills that are important for performing their job better, it can increase employee retention. But, according to them, general training may not create the same effect. For example, an interviewee stated:

“(...) For me it is important that I feel like an asset to the company. The firm can demonstrate this by suggesting training courses and projects, not because they don’t have more people to participate, but because they think it fits my profile and my skills. This shows that they care about me.”

Additionally, during the interviews, it was mentioned many times that although the company is increasingly betting on T&D, it still does not have a defined or structured plan to apply these activities. Thus, some interviewees said that for T&D to have an impact on retention, better management and communication of T&D activities is needed. A participant shared his view on the matter by stating:

“(...) I think the company has to have a better-defined structure of training and development activities to have the expected impact on employee retention.”

Furthermore, one of the interviewees referred that when the training provided to employees is certified and visible to external companies, the organization runs the risk of losing the employee. Yet, as we can see below, the interviewee also mentioned that by not providing this type of training, the company runs a higher risk of losing this employee because he does not feel that he can grow within this organisation, and consequently leads to lower levels of satisfaction and motivation:

“(...) By giving this kind of training that may be attractive to other companies, of course, the current company may risk losing employees. However, the dissatisfaction of not having this training leads to an even greater risk of losing that same employee.”

In the end, a large proportion of respondents agreed that T&D investment has the greatest impact on employee motivation which can lead to a further increase in employee retention. They also mentioned that when they feel that the company invests in them and is interested in their growth, it makes them develop feelings of loyalty towards the company, which also increases retention.

Chapter 4: Discussion and Conclusions

In this final chapter, we discuss the main results collected from the semi-structured interviews and outline the recommendations to be considered by the company and the limitations and suggestions for future research. Additionally, this chapter also presents the main conclusions, acknowledging some management implications for the company INOVA+.

4.1 Discussing the main findings

The main objective of this case study is to analyse the INOVA+ workers' perceptions of the value of T&D on employee retention. The previously stated results also allow us to see how perceived T&D can influence employee's motivation, satisfaction, loyalty, and performance.

Firstly, at the beginning of the interviews, only five participants mentioned employee continuous development, associated with career progression options, to be an important factor that contributes to their decision to stay at INOVA+. This shows that half of the employees' value more other factors than T&D activities, such as work environment, compensation, flexibility, and closeness between employees. On the other hand, when they were asked what would make them leave the company, none of the interviewees mentioned T&D. Therefore, we can affirm that T&D can play a part in the worker's decision to stay but it's not important enough to make them want to leave if the company does not provide this type of initiatives regularly.

Moreover, in this second part of the interview, the participants were asked to describe the positive and negative T&D aspects at INOVA+ and their impact on employees. Some training activities like group sharing sessions, some certified

and outsourced courses on excel and other software programs, on-the-job training, health, and safety training were mentioned. In addition, it was pointed out that employee development activities are more common than training, including assessment meetings, coaching, and mentoring programs. The company sometimes also invests in post-graduate studies for specific employees, but this investment has associated conditions where the employee must stay one or two more years in the organization, which can be seen as a way for the company to recover its investment in the employee and not to incur in monetary losses.

Nevertheless, it was clear that not all departments have the same options when it comes to T&D and that the company does not have a structured and formalized plan when it comes to how and who they provide these options. Also, most participants aren't aware of the budget allocated for T&D or that they have the possibility to ask the company to invest in external courses.

The interviewees mentioned that the T&D options offered by INOVA+ also lack a previous needs evaluation of the worker's skill set and that they often end up receiving training that they don't find relevant and feel unmotivated to participate. This is in line with what was stated by Aguinis and Kraiger (2009) that for a company to receive the advantages of T&D, one must conduct a needs assessment of its worker's abilities and ensure they invest in the proper sort of training. It is also related to what was described by Tsai and Tai (2003) that if the workers do not feel the T&D session is important it will have a negative impact on their motivation levels.

Furthermore, all the interviewees mentioned employee motivation has the main consequence of T&D. They stated that when the training is specific it makes the employees feel more valued by the company and it can also increase their overall performance. Therefore, it's a win-win situation, where the company is

achieving better results and the employee is motivated and satisfied (Kraiger et al., 2004).

Loyalty was also a very important aspect mentioned in the interviews. The company, in some departments, invests a lot in mentoring and coaching newly arrived workers with low experience. This makes the new workers feel integrated and supported in their jobs and loyal towards the company, forming a sense of obligation to reciprocate this support by ultimately deciding to stay with the company instead of looking for new opportunities.

When it came to talking about the impact of T&D on employee retention, most of the interviewees agreed that when the employees feel the company is investing in their growth by providing T&D options that it can have a positive influence on their motivation and their decision to stay or leave the firm.

We can observe that, in general, the interviewees' responses are consistent with the social exchange theory (Koster et al., 2011), which states that when a company invests in training it significantly enhances the perceptions of support in their workers' competencies, and consequently increases employee retention. Furthermore, the respondents emphasized the importance of returning the firm's investment in their T&D, establishing a psychological contract in which the worker feels emotionally tied to the company and chooses to stay (Georgellis & Lange, 2007).

According to the portability of training, some participants stated that the company might risk losing its employee by providing training that can be useful in other companies, however they run a bigger risk of losing the employee if they don't provide this type of training because he/she will be less satisfied and motivated towards the job. Therefore, we can affirm that providing general training has more benefits than not providing it at all.

These findings on the portability of general skills go against Becker (1962) human capital theory and the research conducted by Loewenstein and Spletzer (1999). They declared that since general skills can be transferable to other firms the company that provides the employees with general training can risk having their workers poached by other firms (Black & Lynch, 1998) and creates a negative effect on retention. However, the interviewees expressed that not providing general training shows a lack of interest by the company and can make them feel invaluable and neglected. Therefore, we can conclude that even general and portable T&D has a positive effect on retention because is influenced by the positive effects of T&D on employee's satisfaction and attitudes (Dietz & Zwick, 2020; Lee & Bruvold, 2003).

There were some interviewees that mentioned that INOVA+ should invest more in outsourced and certified training, but it was understood that it is not a factor that will influence their decision to stay or leave the company. In this sense, we can assume that, contrarily by what was found by Dietz and Zwick (2020), the visibility and credibility might be an important factor for some employees, but it doesn't have the expected negative effect on employee retention.

It's important to mention that the answers to the first part of the interview, when T&D was not yet mentioned as the subject of this case study, do not coincide with the answers that were gathered in this final question. On this last question, some interviewees mentioned that if INOVA+ stopped offering T&D opportunities that they might consider leaving, however, in the first question they did not mention the inexistence of T&D as an aspect that would make them leave INOVA+.

In summary, based on the interviewees' responses, the majority of the participants agree that a company can increase the motivation, satisfaction and performance levels of its employees by investing in T&D, and consequently, this will have a positive impact on employee retention.

After the discussion of the main findings, recommendations will be proposed to the INOVA+ company to improve its T&D activities and increase retention.

4.2 Recommendations for INOVA+

The findings suggest that the human resources department of the company could invest in a more structured and defined plan of T&D activities because it was clear that many of the employees are not aware of all the training opportunities and development initiatives. Therefore, there needs to be better communication between human resources and the other departments about T&D activities so that all workers feel equally supported. For example, many of the interviewees did not know that the company invests in external courses (post-graduate courses, seminars, etc.) and that there is a budget especially allocated for employee T&D.

It is also important that the company manages to provide the same number of T&D options to employees from the various departments so that there are no employees who feel more valued and motivated than others.

Furthermore, specific training is more valued by employees than general training, as it makes them feel the company cares about developing their individual and job-specific skills which influence their decision to stay at INOVA+. Therefore, the company could focus on suggesting more specific training activities to increase employee retention.

The company could also invest more in employee development activities, such as coaching or mentoring, as these were the ones that interviewees considered most significant in terms of impact on motivation and job satisfaction.

Finally, it is necessary to follow up on the assessment meetings that the human resources department conducts with employees. Considering that many of the

interviewees mentioned that they find these meetings a good practice for employee development, but that afterwards their suggestions are not implemented, and they do not receive feedback, which makes this process meaningless. It is recommended that the suggestions given by the employees are evaluated and communicated to the management of the company to be discussed and perhaps then implemented. We believe that this is the practice that will bring the most benefits in terms of employee retention because the workers will feel that their voice is heard, and they will be motivated to give back the investment that has been made in their career progression.

4.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

The results obtained in this research should be interpreted considering its limitations. First, there is a limitation of the sample size, once to have a more generalized results, the number of the participants should have been higher than ten employees. Also, some variables, such as the department the interviewee is from or their job description or their level of experience, were not taken into consideration when choosing the sample. Hence, in future investigations, the number of participants in the study should be increased and more parameters should be taken into consideration when choosing the sample, in order to obtain more reliable results.

Secondly, the methodology used in this case study has its own limitations as well. Case studies had been scrutinized by their lack of rigor and the interviewer's subjectivity in analyzing the data in question. This subjectivity can be averted if the researcher avoids biases and suppresses ambiguity to collect reliable results. Additionally, this limitation can also be averted if the researcher shares with the participants the interpretations of the data and give them a chance to discuss or clarify the answers.

Additionally, the sector where the company INOVA+ operates is very specific, meaning that these findings might not be applicable to other sectors. Future research on this matter could compare employees operating in different sectors or industries to see if it would have an impact on the results.

Finally, this case study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, where the amount of training and employee development activities was significantly reduced due to the restrictions imposed and the fact that a large proportion of people were working remotely. In this sense, the interviewed workers who have been with the company for a short time may have their perceptions influenced due to the pandemic constraints experienced in recent years.

4.4 Conclusion

The interest from this study emerged from a curricular internship carried out at INOVA+, a company specialized in supporting the growth of other organizations through innovation. The goal of the company was to conduct an analysis of their T&D programs and how these are related to employee retention. Taking into consideration the results obtained, it was possible to gather the employees' perceptions of the type of T&D they receive, including positive and negative aspects, and understand if T&D influences their decision to stay at INOVA+.

The semi-structured interviews conducted with INOVA+ employees shows that the interviewees believe that there has been a growing investment by the company in T&D, however, it's clear that the company does not have this aspect as the main priority. Furthermore, it was suggested by the interviewees that there must be a greater focus on employee development activities, such as coaching, mentoring and assessment meetings, in all departments, as these are the

activities, they consider most relevant in increasing employee motivation and performance.

We can also conclude that the T&D process is not well structured or standardized in the company, which leads to many of the workers not being fully aware of all the T&D opportunities offered by INOVA+.

According to the results, the main impact of T&D is on employee motivation, satisfaction, loyalty, performance, and retention. However, it was possible to see that training specific to the employee's capabilities has a greater influence on motivation and retention than general training. Additionally, contrary to expectations and previous literature, the credibility and visibility of the training do not seem to have much influence on the employees' decision to leave or to stay.

In short, we can affirm that most INOVA+ workers consider that investment in T&D has a positive impact on employee retention because it increases employee motivation, satisfaction, and performance levels. However, better management and provision of these activities by the company is needed to have the intended effects. Also, we consider that these implications are applicable to other organizations, although future studies are needed to support this assertion.

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Appendix

Interview script

Part one: Introduction

1. In your opinion, what makes people in this company want to stay?
2. And for you, what are the factors that make you want to stay at INOVA+?
 - a. Is there any reason that makes you want to leave the firm?

Part two: Training and development

3. Let's now focus on training and development. What are the aspects that you most appreciate or consider most positive about T&D in this company?
4. Also, in relation to T&D, what are the aspects that you do not appreciate in this company?
5. You mentioned earlier the T&D aspects you consider most positive at INOVA+. Why do you consider those the most positive?
 - a. How does those aspects affect the employees and the company?
6. You mentioned earlier, as well, the T&D aspects you consider most negative at INOVA+. Why do you consider those the most negative?
 - a. How does those aspects affect the employees and the company?

Part three: Training, development, and retention

7. Considering everything discussed before, do you think that providing the employees with T&D can influence employee retention?
8. Do you have any additional comments you would like to share on what has been discussed throughout this interview?