Centralization of Training Services in Sport Organization — Case Study:

Aspire Zone Foundation

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Abstract: This research sets out to study the extent to which centralising the training services within Aspire Zone Foundation (AZF) can add and leverage the generated value of the offered training in AZF. Among other things, it reviews and addresses some of the best practices of service centralisation in similar contexts. The focus of the conducted review is on training topics, instructor professionalism, quality of service, training environment, and training cost.

In multi-business organisations like AZF where sports, medical, and education services are provided, the centralisation emerges as important strategy that supports a variety of businesses.

This research contributes to the fields of service centralisation. It also demonstrates that training services can be enhanced with the availability of a proper environment, cost, quality, and professional level of instruction.

This study employs a multi-methodological approach at all its stages, including data collection and analysis. A literature review of the best practices of service centralisation, questionnaires, interviews, and documentation analysis were all conducted to obtain the data on which the study was based. The final analysis of this data was used to develop a new model of training centralization within AZF. The research findings are validated through the development of a set of hypotheses which were tested using a secondary survey questionnaire based on the findings from the first survey questionnaire, interviews, and documentation analysis to come up with meaningful and user-centred findings.

This study recommends that AZF management go with creating a new central unit for the offered training for all its business units based on the finding that centralisation enhances the chosen training topics and makes them more business-related, promotes the level of instructor professionalism, enhances the quality of service, allocates a better training environment, and reduces training costs.

Key words: sport organization, training services, centralization, quality of service
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1. Introduction

In business, all organisations provide training services for their employees. Most of them train their staff in areas such as leadership, communications, performance management, or lean operations. Enterprises that operate

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training departments have to choose one from the three models of training services: centralised within a single entity, decentralised with multiple training groups, or organised as a hybrid of the two, known as a federated model. As argued by McGurk (2010), training programs generate greater business value for organisations when the business performance metrics are clearly reflected in the offered training curricula.

There is continuous debate about the effectiveness of centralised versus decentralised training. Some researchers debate whether centralisation has the advantage of removing spaces between trainers and trainee, equitable distribution of work, specialisation, economy, and quick decision; however, it has the disadvantages of bureaucracy, delay in work, no loyalty, and lack of secrecy (Francis, 2010). This debate has no black and white answer; however, the centralised model or the decentralised model work better when running a business (MBA Notes, 2014).

As stated by the training industry (2014), "A Centralized Training Organization is one that organizes the training function into a single or central group within the enterprise where all resources and processes are managed within a single organization, reporting to one senior executive or leadership team" while the Decentralized Training Organization is an Organizational Design (OD) model that describes how the training function is structured inside an enterprise. This model refers to companies that have multiple training functions or organizations for various lines of business.

In AZF, the applied model is the decentralised training model, where different business units have their own departments of training and professional development. AZF consists of three-member organisations — Aspire Academy (AA), Aspetar (AT), and Aspire Logistics (AL) — that work together to offer some of the world's finest sports stadiums and venues, offering a unique sport, sports medicine, research, and education destination for the international sports industry (Aspire, 2014).

The question in this study is designed to investigate the potential value that can be generated by switching to a centralised training model. To achieve the research goal, four research methods have been applied: literature review, documentation analysis, surveys, and interviews. The data collection and analysis were conducted based on studying five main factors: topic, instructor, QoS, environment and training cost. Achieving the research goal of this study helps AZF to leverage the generated business value using the centralised training model.
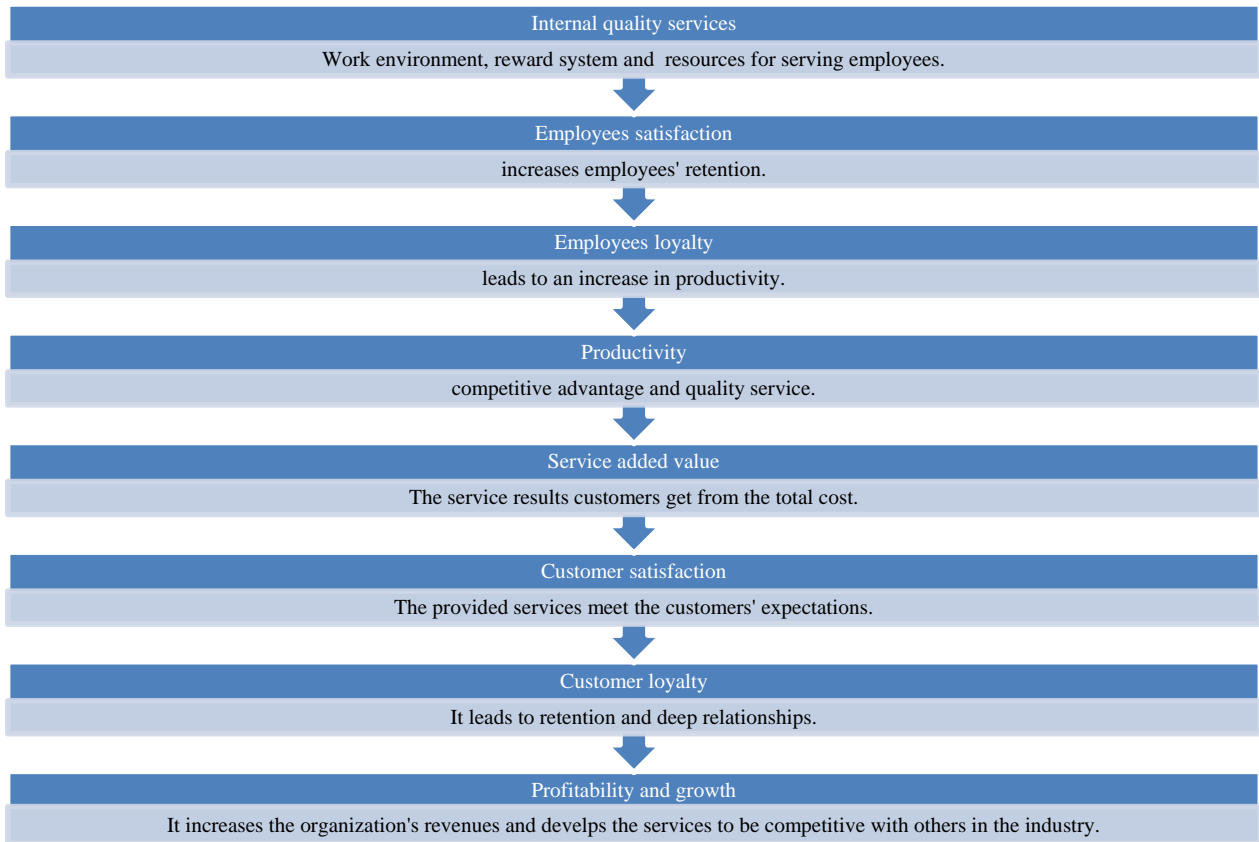
2. Literature Review

Witesman (2010) studied three factors in centralising/decentralising governmental services in the United States. findings included a direct relationship between these three factors and a set of moderators: structural centralisation, legal requirements, centralisation of training decisions within an agency, and having legal and/or procedural conformity as a goal for state-mandated training within an agency. Guess (2005) argued that the decentralisation of any governmental structure depends mainly on the culture and institutions sharing the government structure, background support, and the design of the decentralisation process.

Heskett (1994) mentioned that in the new economic of services, management should focus on customer satisfaction and frontline employees, considering factors leading to more benefits. These elements are as follows:

- Investment in manpower
- Technology that assists frontline employees
- Contact renewal for employees and training services
- Performance compensation to increase motivation

In addition, the new economics of services require innovative techniques to balance the effect of employees' satisfaction, loyalty, and productivity to assess the quality of the delivered products and services (Heskett, 1994). Consequently, these techniques will lead to customer satisfaction and loyalty and assess the impact of the organisation profit and growth (Heskett, 1994).

Internal quality services
Work environment, reward system and resources for serving employees.

⬇

Employees satisfaction
increases employees' retention.

⬇

Employees loyalty
leads to an increase in productivity.

⬇

Productivity
competitive advantage and quality service.

⬇

Service added value
The service results customers get from the total cost.

⬇

Customer satisfaction
The provided services meet the customers' expectations.

⬇

Customer loyalty
It leads to retention and deep relationships.

⬇

Profitability and growth
It increases the organization's revenues and develps the services to be competitive with others in the industry.

Figure 1: Techniques That Lead to Customer Satisfaction
Source: Heskett (1994)

On the other hand, and acording to Reilly (2000), there are three major drivers for introducing the HR shared services:

1) Cost reduction: to save manpower, cut down on room space, and ensure high standards of service delivery

2) Quality of service: attain professionalism, stability and accuracy, up-to-date practices, efficient processes, and punctuality in time and budget to reach customer satisfaction

3) Organisational redesign: to achieve structural flexibility, share knowledge, and redesign HR functions to become more strategic.

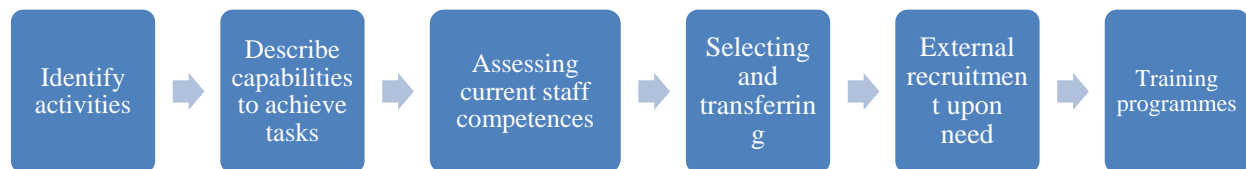So Reilly (2000) claimed that the purpose of redesigning HR is to change, as shown in Table 1.

Technology, as another factor, is seen as a facilitator of change rather than a motive in itself.

Reilly (2000) argued that HR shared services include but are not limited to certain administrative tasks such as relocation services, recruitment administration, employee welfare support, training support, and management information. Reilly mentioned one company that implemented HR shared services:

Table 1 HR Redesign

From	To
Short-term orientation	Long-term orientation
Bogged down roles	More strategic roles
Reactive	Proactive
Inspector	Advisor
Advocate of traditions	Open to change
Employee well-being	Organisation support function

Source: Reilly (2000)

Identify activities → Describe capabilities to achieve tasks → Assessing current staff competences → Selecting and transferring → External recruitment upon need → Training programmes

Figure 2 Company Which Started HR Services
Source: Reilly (2000)

Reilly (2000) argued that establishing shared services as a separate entity of an organisation will allow it to be an independent operation and move from being a budget centre to a profit unit. According to Reilly (2000), the shared services allow the organisation to benefit from specialists who are capable of handling a variety of work-related issues. Reilly found that shared services are virtually delivered based on the efficiency of technology. Pulling out the shared services in one position has several advantages:

- Easy flow of information and shared learning
- Easy problem solving due to existing expertise
- Flexible transfer of employees within the organisation

Reilly (2000) claimed that for the shared services to be more effective and closely linked to customers and local performance, quality standards and procedures supported by a performance rubric should be established. Furthermore, other organisations are involved in evaluating customer satisfaction through surveys, customer panels, and external benchmarking. Monitoring is executed in terms of timelines and accuracy. Some organisations have established service level agreements (SLAs) between HR and customers to monitor performance to define the nature of the delivered services, frequency, and quality expectations (Reilly, 2000). Based on Reilly (2000), the following advantages and disadvantages of the HR shared services are summarised in Figures 3 and 4.

According to Reilly (2000), in order for HR to enhance the chances of success of the shared services, the following criteria have to be met: recognising the variety of the customers, standardisation and customisation of activities, periodic review of HR processes, effective means of quality service delivery, deciding on in-house or outsourcing services to deliver activities, service monitoring to meet clients' needs, ensuring HR managers have the skills to meet the strategic expectations of the organisation, delegating responsibilities and authorities to line managers and having HR staff support them, customer awareness of the organisation's policies and strategic goals, rotation of staff through different tasks to ensure teamwork to increase know-how, including line managers in personnel work, and giving responsibilities to employees.
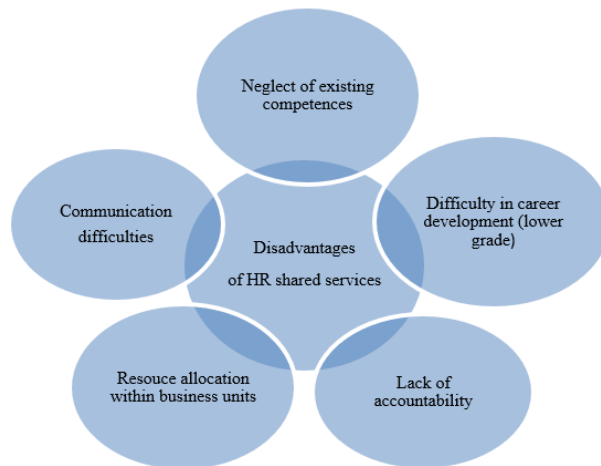
Figure 3   Disadvantages of HR shared services
Source: Reilly (2000)
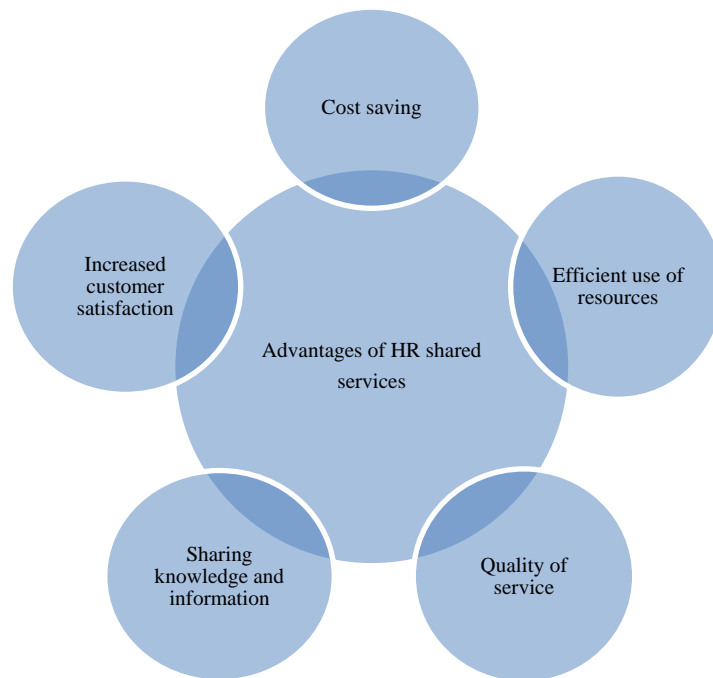
Figure 4   Advantages of HR Shared Services
Source: Reilly (2000)

Wang (2007) highlighted the differences between shared services and outsourcing as follows:

- *General organisational structure*: in shared services, the structure builds and strengthens the collaboration between different business units; in outsourcing, it reduces business networking, though it creates new channels for partnership.
- *Strategies*: in shared services, strategies are beneficial in the long term with regard to cost reduction and knowledge sharing. Outsourcing, on the other hand, will only benefit the organisation in saving costs in the short term.
- *Human resources changes*: in shared services, there will be more qualified staff through the

redeployment process and continuous development while in outsourcing, the organisation relies on external partners.

Wang (2007) claimed that there are three primary components of organisational design for shared services: collaborative partnership network design, optimal service process design, and policy and regulation design. There are also secondary important components such as leadership, control span, information/decision systems, and culture.

Porter (1985) suggested two major strategic methods to apply shared services. Figure 5 illustrates the two strategic methods.
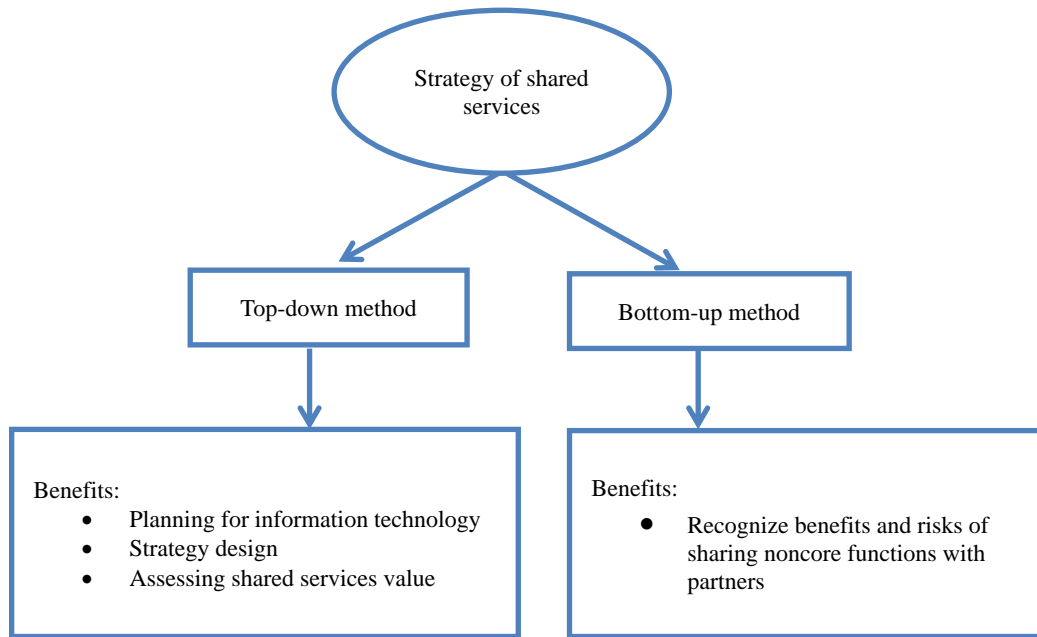
Figure 5   The Two Strategic Methods
Source: Porter (1985)

Janssen (2006) highlighted the efficient improvement of the shared services centres (SSCs) in organisations. By introducing SSCs, services will be offered by one internal department to reduce effort. They have long-term benefits for all members and have competitive advantages compared with outsourcing. Bergeron (2003) argued that shared services are designed to enhance efficiency, add value, reduce cost, and enhance services in organisations. Janssen (2006) mentioned two uses of SSCs for shared services:

1)   Interorganisational SSC (departments within the same organisation)

2)   Interorganisational SSC (among different organisations)

Janssen (2006) noted key features of SSCs and outsourcing (Table 2):

Table 2   Features of the SSCs and Outsourcing

Centralised model of SSCs	Outsourcing
• Control of service and cost saving (Bergeron, 2003) • Customer ownership feeling • Relationship: many clients with one internal provider • Limited to the internal organisation and its resources	• Contract-based for a short term with financial cost (Willcocks & Kern, 1998) • Addresses one client • Relationship: one client to one or more external providers • Responsibilities assumed by the external provider

Source: Janssen (2006)

Figure 6   Departments Responsible for Performing Different Tasks for the SSCs
Source: Janssen (2006)

In its publication about implementing shared services centres, the Institute of Management Accountants (2000) highlighted the importance of the physical feature of logistics and its effect on staff self-esteem and size (LLP, 2000). Shared services require high costs for infrastructure, technology, and relocating employees. However, such changes can lead to the loss of face-to-face contact. On the upside, organisational effectiveness, cost saving, and accountability have more benefits with centralisation according to its supporters. Another advantage is that teamwork and sharing knowledge take place when professionals have the same strategic planning. Training in the shared services' environment is more effective and stable and helps reduce the effects of staff turnover and absences.

What characterises the introduction of shared services is that it is tailored to meet the customers' needs. To do so, there should be a balance between cost and effort with external benchmark performance and customers' satisfaction. Consequently, there should be a redesign of how and where work is carried out to concentrate on value-added activities.

In order to better apply the SSC structure, each business unit should identify and assess the best procedures by conducting process analysis, benchmarking, workflow design, and route mapping (LLP, 2000). During the SSC implementation, the governance body plays certain roles such as solving disputes, deciding upon services, and setting smart objectives and a reward system. Two key features should be considered during the implementation phase of shared services in organisations:

1)   **Set plans for the change management** (project rollout, recruitment and training, and change

management strategy) to ensure the success of achieving the SSC objectives. For the SSC to be effective and successful, the recruitment and training programs should cover the following areas: identify key employees' skills and competences, evaluate their existing capabilities, and set training and education programs. Communication plays an important role in the change management strategy to increase awareness of the SSC concept and to obtain commitment to the desired change.

2) **Awareness of cost and customer:** An oriented, customer-focused organisation can be achieved using different methods: giving/receiving feedback to customers, linking recognition to performance, and customer service ratios.

3. Research Methodology of the Empirical Study

Table 3 illustrates the relationship among the topics under research, the research problem, the research goal, and the research questions (adapted from Cresswell, 2005).

Table 3   Research Artefacts

Artefact	Description/circumstance
Topic	Centralisation of Employment Training Services (ETS) in AZF
Research problem	Several SBUs in AZF are paying a lot to host external educational services with a variety of QoS levels while AA, one of the SBUs, has the required resources and expertise to promote the ETS in all AZF. This raises a need for effective training to save costs and ensure high-quality training.
Goal	Achieving higher business value from the training services in AZF
Research question	How to centralise the ETS in AZF to enhance the generated value from it

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

This section presents the collected data to analyse the characteristics of the currently offered training services at AZF. This data will be analysed to extract the most important factors that play a major role in adding value to these services and increase its effectiveness in supporting the corporate business of AZF. It then analyses in depth each surveyed factor by developing a new set of hypotheses to enhance these services through centralisation via a central training centre at AZF.

The first stage of the data collection included deployment of a survey and interviews with a number of staff members at AZF plus analysis of the available documentation regarding training of AZF staff. This analysis resulted in a set of hypotheses on how the centralisation process can reflect positively on these services. The second stage included another survey of a group of AZF employees to test the proposed set of hypotheses. After this stage and based on the analysis of the collected data plus a literature review of the best practices of centralising/decentralising business services, the findings included how centralisation can affect the training quality, cost, instructors' professionalism, and environment positively or negatively.

The first survey and interviews targeted the definition of the user background and his/her experience with the currently provided training services, topics he/she looks for in future training, benefits of using the currently offered training programs, drawbacks, values when centralising these programs, and the most preferred training settings.

The second survey (in stage 2) was built on the basis of the collected background from the first survey and user interviews that focussed on testing whether users agree on centralising these services to affect the QoS, cost,

environment, and level of professionalism of the offered training. The researcher nominated a group of the surveyed and interviewed users and communicated with them in the second survey about the proposed hypotheses. The nominated group was chosen based on their experience in receiving training through AZF. The targeted group included 105 staff members (33% of the first survey respondents), typically the top-ranked users in terms of their number of years working at AZF, number of received training opportunities, and as per their job title in AZF.

Both surveys were offered in both English and Arabic to make it easier for the users to understand exactly what is required. Both surveys are included in Appendices 1 and 2. The majority of the surveyed users were of different nationalities. Some of them received training in Arabic.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis of the Collected Data From the First Survey

The description of the surveyed sample enabled the researcher to develop a comprehensive view of the respondent profiles and evaluate whether any further treatments, like recategorisation, are required.

The data collection stage included 2 surveys, 14 interviews, and analysis of 39 training-related documents. A total of 469 questionnaires in 2 surveys were answered completely by participants across AZF. A total of 321 respondents answered the first survey and 148 respondents answered the second one. Based on the sample characteristics, the descriptive analysis of the applied research instrument revealed the characteristics of the surveyed sample in terms of the following:

- Number of years working at AZF
- Culture and country of origin
- Level of computer skills
- Demographics

Prior to analysis, the survey responses were examined using the SPSS statistical software for accuracy of data entry, missing values, normality, and outliers. Routine descriptive statistics procedures were carried out using the descriptive analysis tools in SPSS. The missing data were below 5% of the collected answers. So, they were replaced with the mode value (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004; Hair et al., 2006). The findings of these statistics are presented below.

- The first survey's respondents were 71% male and 29% female.

As per the dominant cultural norms, female students were mostly oriented towards local education and training services. Families are always worried about sending females into external education, either outside Qatar or even in unknown organisations. So, offering local training services within AZF will be highly preferred for female staff members.

- The surveyed samples included 31 PhD holders, 80 master's degree holders, 155 BSc holders, and 54 members who hold degrees less than a BSc. Figure 10 reflects the highly qualified staff at AZF, who all are expected to care about their time, cost, and effort when receiving training opportunities either inside or outside AZF.
- When offering training to staff, it makes sense to consider job titles, which reflect some level of expectation of their needs and input during training. The collected data shows that many titles, including coaches, teachers, administrative staff, specialists, doctors, technical staff, and management, reflect those who require specialised training. At least some of them can offer some of their knowledge and experience in other training they organise. This confirms the opportunities from knowledge transfer and sharing between staff, which creates the opportunity for successful internal development.
- Considering work experience, a total of 96.5% of employees have less than 10 years of experience at

AZF. This reflects the high extent to which the PD offering will be required. Extensive requests for PD will mean higher cost in terms of fees, time, and effort when training is given by external organisations/training centres. This increases the importance of having a centralised training centre at AZF.

- Nearly one-third of AA's spans four business units at AZF (33.23%). So considering that the Academy is the unit which has the majority of the academic staff, who know about education and new trends in pedagogy, it makes more sense to have such an educational/training centre within AZF, specifically at AA, to save costs and benefit from the available resources at AZF.

- Most staff members can receive training in Arabic (57.83%) or English (90.10%), which proves there is more opportunity for AZF to develop the proposed central training unit because the main languages at AA and for its businesses are English and Arabic. The other statistics on languages show that 60% of users are advanced English speakers.

- There were similar findings for computer skills: 96.79% were good users of computers. Besides the available modern technological resources at AZF, this reflects more opportunity to develop the central training unit. It will lead to a better level of resource allocation at AZF. Similar findings are there for the available job aids (resources or technology) to support what employees learned in training.

- The majority of users (81.3%, 81%, and 72.1%) are optimistic about the link between the training and development from one side and the business strategy from the other side. The optimism level is defined in this research study as the summation of almost always true, mostly true, and sometimes true ratios. This reflects the importance of having the training services close to the organisation's business. Centralising the training services in a new unit or centre within AZF will help in linking the business strategy more tidily to the offered training opportunities.

- Around one-third of the staff members (30%) are not satisfied with the PD services offered to them through their departments. Interviews with some staff included discussions of the reasons for that and reflections of bad organisation; low professionalism and cost of time and effort were mentioned. Findings from the survey (as shown in Figure 16) and interviews reflect the importance of experiencing new local training at AZF with a professional organisation and staff.

- General dissatisfaction was noticed when participants answered questions about their involvement in the last offered training outside AZF. The required effort to attend external training, the poor link between the offered topics and real business context, and the mixture of attendees from AZF and other organisation can play major roles in that dissatisfaction. This raises a new hypothesis about switching to positive satisfaction ratios when having such training facilitated by a professional central unit and within the AZF environment. Figure 17 presents these statistics.

- The professionalism level of the training instructor is a key driver in participants responding to training. The survey results included answers to four questions about the instructor's professionalism. Answers show the instructors' concerns about answering questions during sessions, the effectiveness of the teaching style, instructor enthusiasm, and the overall evaluation of the instructor's performance in presenting the training course. Between 14% and 17% of the answers mentioned dissatisfaction regarding these factors in the last received training. This raises a new hypothesis that offering training with a high level of instructor professionalism will be key factor in accepting the central training unit at AZF as a destination for AZF staff (and others if extended to the outer community).

Among the factors that affect the acceptance of any training, the following factors were prioritised by respondents. Each factor is listed with the justification of how it can play a role in centralising the training services at AZF.

- **The available time I have for the training program:** this time will be reduced when the training is offered within AZF by a new central training unit at AZF.
- **My family commitments:** when receiving training at AZF, this factor continues during the typical workday (in the same location). So there are no extra factors to consider regarding the family commitments when attending the training outside AZF or even overseas.
- **My job commitments:** similar to the previous factor, the employee keeps close to his work environment with continuous opportunity to access his workplace if needed.
- **The subject matter of the training program**: the advantage of having a new central unit within AZF is that it becomes easier to offer programs closely related to the work context for the trainees.
- **The program delivery method:** being within AZF with its available facilities and technologies is a real competitive advantage as it helps to offer the training via many delivery methods. It can be offered face-to-face easily because of the location, and it is also easy to be offer training via the virtual local area network (VLAN) through video conferencing between units with minimum cost (offered in blended mode as well).
- **The quality of instructors of the program**: this is also an important factor and supports training services being centralised within AZF because of the available qualified staff and their experience with AZF business.
- **The books/materials and other resources available:** at AZF, training resources, AZF libraries, labs, hospital, fields, and other resources are available and accessible in the training room.
- **My supervisor at my present job:** Supervisors will be able to motivate, participate with, follow-up on, and collaborate with their teams more easily when training is offered at AZF.
- **My colleagues at my present job**: similar to the last factor, an AZF training centre makes it easier for participants to motivate, participate with, follow-up on, and collaborate with their colleagues.

The collected answers to the questions about the training environment reflect the importance of the environment safety, cleaning and organisation, lighting and illumination, tools and technology, chairs and furniture, accessibility (especially for special need persons), and sound clearance. These considerations reflect high standards at AZF; AZF offering training within its buildings and facilities offers it a competitive advantage. Charts in Figure 28 illustrate these findings.

The last question on this survey was as follows: "I feel more comfortable when receiving my PD sessions within my workplace". This is directly related to the user's acceptance of training within his work environment. The collected results reflected the high preference of 73% of respondents to receive their professional training within the workplace. This result correlates with the previous results from other questions to confirm the opportunity to develop a new training centre for AZF to achieve a higher value from the training services for the staff and AZF business.

4.2 Analysis of the Documentation

The analysis of the collected documentation will be conducted based on each of the studied factors: topics, instructor professionalism, quality of service, environment, and cost.

4.2.1 Topics

All the collected documents have references that focus on offering training and development on business-related topics. Additional skills related to personal development are also included. The managerial development is the third important topic in terms of collected documentation. In the following paragraphs, offering these topics will be analysed based on the return on investment (ROI) considering centralisation versus decentralisation. ROI is a performance measure used to evaluate the efficiency of an investment or to compare the efficiency of a number of different investments.

To calculate ROI, the benefit (return) of an investment is divided by the cost of the investment; the result is expressed as a percentage or a ratio. The ROI formula is as follows:

$$ROI = \frac{(Gain\ from\ Investment - Cost\ of\ Investment)}{Cost\ of\ Investment}$$

In the above formula, "gains from investment" refer to the proceeds obtained from selling the investment of interest. ROI is a popular metric because of its versatility and simplicity.

(a) Scenario 1: Centralisation ROI

Each business unit at AZF requires training and development services through external providers. This brings to attention the gained value against the paid cost, time, and effort. In case of centralising the training services, the mentioned above, documentation gives examples of training topics related to AZF core businesses. Other documents contain information about trainees from AZF units with the topics they are nominated for. The job titles and topics reflect high opportunities to offer these topics internally based on knowledge transfer sessions. Many staff members are qualified as to others' required topics. In case of centralisation, such expertise can be invited to offer these topics to the central training unit and gain a corresponding benefit. On the other hand, AZF benefits from saving the trainees' time, effort, and additional costs to receive external training. The trainees have the opportunity to benefit from similar cases when they have something to offer from the required topics. Centralisation offers examples and case studies from within AZF which are more reliable and relate to daily work.

In terms of ROI, the value is higher when exchanging the training fees between AZF units. In this case, AZF will not pay for other parties; however, it gains a new revenue centre. This training centre can extend its activities to the external community and exploit the brand name of AZF as a famous organisation in Qatar and even worldwide. In this case it brings additional revenues to AZF. Effective marketing strategy can help in advertising that to the public, and a new cost centre and accounting system can be developed to make it a professional training centre that could grow to become an independent business unit under the umbrella of AZF. All that adds to the gained ROI.

(b) Scenario 2: Decentralisation of ROI

In terms of ROI, all opportunities to develop additional revenue of training will be restricted to intangible benefits like getting the required expertise.

4.2.2 Instructor Professionalism

The provided document (AZF Final Update Arabic 07-03-2011 (2) (p. 87)) included a procedure to consider the professionalism level of the trainer when nominating training for AZF staff. Although there is little input regarding this point within the collected documentation, instructor professionalism is mandatory for successful training at AZF.

4.2.3 Quality of Service

It is AZF's policy to ensure that staff at all levels have the requisite knowledge and skills to perform

effectively their assigned duties and responsibilities as part of the organisation's commitment to professional development. The purpose of the training policy and procedure is to outline all the key components of training offered to AZF employees in alignment with organisational aims and objectives.

As per the document regarding training policy and procedure, training needs are identified to help maintain a capable and viable workforce which meets AZF's need for a strategy for developing employees in line with the strategic business goals. Line managers, executive managers, learning and development, and the chief human resources advisor (CHRA) will identify training courses based on organisational requirements, employee needs, and available budgets. Training needs are identified based on the employee's evaluation/appraisal.

4.2.4 Environment

Internal training documentation did not include references to the environment because of the considerations of the state-of-the art facilities in the AZF environment. However, for external training, there is no documentation for referencing. The collected documentation included 26 evaluation forms from the different business units in AZF. All forms should include feedback questions about the training environment. Factors like safety, air conditioning, facilities, and fire-fighting procedures should be clear for the staff before conducting any training in or outside the organisation.

4.2.5 Cost

Reviewing documents revealed the training policies and outlines for covering training costs listed below.

4.2.6 Approval Process

As per the AZF Table of Authority in the AZF New Training Policy Procedures — Final document, approval for external training will be as follows:

Table 4   Approval Process

Training Value	First Endorser	Second Endorser	Third Endorser	Final Approver
Up to QR 50,000	Line Manager	L&D	HRM-BU	CHRA/DG
Above QR 50,000	Line Manager	L&D	CHRA/HRM/DG	The President

Although there is little information related to cost, the above procedure shows the training fees, which will increase when considering the number of AZF staff. Other costs include the training time and effort, which will definitely decrease when conducting the required training within AZF.

4.3 Interview Analysis

The following section presents the descriptive analysis of the collected data from interviews.

Tables 5 and 6 show the summary of interview responses according to the main factors designed for data collection. Accordingly, the following findings are summarised as the most frequently highlighted by the interviewees for each factor.

1) Topic: Managerial leadership skills and strategic planning, IT and soft skills, communication skills, business writing, and report writing.
2) Instructor professionalism: knowledgeable, qualified, and certified expert.
3) Quality of service: feedback, course type, and training objective.
4) Environment: Safety and security, facilities and IT resources.
5) Cost: decreased time, money, and effort and avoid duplication.

Regarding centralisation, half of the interviewees agreed that centralised training has an advantage over

decentralised while the other half agreed with that also but with some comments related to the type of training (general/specialised) and the management of the training services. To sum up, all interviewed personnel agreed to the advantage of a centralised over decentralised training centre.

Table 5   Interview Summary

Topic		Instructor Professionalism		Quality of Service	
Theme	No	Qualification	No	Criteria	No
1. English	1	Knowledgeable	12	Time	4
2. IT and soft skills	9	Qualified and certified expert	12	Personal issues	4
3. Managerial leadership skills and strategic planning	11	Owner of the idea, technique, or research	3	Course type	5
4. Communication skills, business writing, and report writing	9	Highly specialised	3	Course providers	3
5. Presentation skills	4	Ability to convert to practice	3	Feedback	7
6. Physiotherapy, nutrition, and clinical-related technical skills	7	External	4	Work responsibilities	3
7. Learning related issues	4	From excellent specialised centres	3	Resources	4
8. First aids, safety, and security	7	Ability to motivate trainees	4	Training objective	5
9. New staff orientation	3	Quality of the course and its relation to the work	3	Relation to SMART objectives	2
10. Customer service and patient care	3	Add a new value	3	Relation to job	4
11. Venue management and event planning	2	Ability to motivate trainees	4	Effect of supervisor	4

Table 6   Interview Summary Continued

Environment		Cost (time, money, and effort)		Centralisation	
Criteria	Number	Criteria	Number	Response	Number
External	4	Decrease time	9	Clear Yes	7
Internal	5	Decrease money	9	Conditional Yes	7
External and internal	5	Decrease effort	9		
Safe and secure	8	Decrease mistakes	6		
Facilities	8	Decrease manpower	4		
Furniture	6	Avoid duplication	8		
IT resources	7	Effectiveness	4		
Venue	5	Teamwork	2		
Similar sites to real	2				

5. Research Hypotheses

From the collected data and the conducted review, the following hypotheses are defined for each studied factor:

5.1 Topic

H1: Centralising the training services within AZF helps in offering closer and more related topics for AZF staff.

H2: Offering the required training through an SSC within AZF helps in supporting the training topics with the required training resources (including labs, hospital, and pitches) which are part of AZF facilities.

5.2 Instructor Professionalism

H3: Centralising the training services within AZF helps in nominating highly qualified trainers from inside or outside AZF.

H4: Offering the required training through an SSC within AZF helps in supporting the training staff with frequent updates on their pedagogical skills by the already existing specialised staff in Aspire Academy (business unit of AZF).

5.3 QoS

H5: Centralising the training services within AZF helps in affecting training with the desired QoS, which is supported by the already available resources and expertise.

H6: Offering the required training through a SSC within AZF helps in monitoring the level of QoS. Based on the granted authority, decisions can be taken to control the level of quality.

5.4 Environment

H7: Centralising the training services within AZF ensures that a proper environment and enough resources are provided for the training.

H8: Offering the required training through an SSC within AZF confirms that safety considerations and disaster recovery are provided at a high standard that is already available and certified in AZF.

5.5 Cost

H9: Centralising the training services within AZF ensures lower cost, especially when considering using the available resources in AZF, including the human resources and facilities.

H10: Offering the required training through an SSC within AZF saves a lot of time and effort, which makes it easier for staff members to follow their work from a closer location.

6. Data Collection Part 2: Results From the Second Questionnaire

Every question from the second survey was defined to test one of the hypotheses. Every hypothesis was tested by four questions to ensure the validity of findings. The four questions have nearly the same meaning but use different wording to avoid data bias. The first question for each hypothesis proposes the hypothesis directly and the second is a confirmatory question to validate the user's understanding of the hypothesis's first question in sequence to ensure no data bias. In analysing these data, the definition of optimism — "the level of agreement defined by the total of the 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' answers", will be used to measure the levels of agreement for all users around the proposed questions.

The answers to the second survey revealed consistent optimism in all answers. All answers have an optimism level between 71.4% and 87.8%, which reflects a strong link between centralising the training services within AZF and welcome and acceptance by the respondents. Table 7 below summarises the descriptive analysis of the collected data.

Table 7   2nd Survey Analysis

No	Factors	Hypothesised Link	Result from analysis	Compared with hypotheses
1	Training Topics	H1: Centralising the training services within AZF helps in offering closer and more related topics for AZF staff.	strong link (71.4%)	same as hypothesis
		H2: Offering the required training through a shared training service within AZF helps in supporting the training topics with the required training resources (including labs, hospital, and pitches) which are part of AZF facilities.	strong link (79.9%)	same as hypothesis
		H1 confirmatory question: Offering closed-to-business topics enhances the overall performance of the trainee.	strong link (81.6%)	same as hypothesis
		H2 confirmatory question: Offering training services within AZF enriches the offered topics with a variety of interests that are defined by AZF units and staff members.	strong link (76%)	same as hypothesis
2	Instructor Professionalism	H3: Centralising the training services within AZF helps in nominating highly qualified trainers from inside or outside AZF.	strong link (84.6%)	same as hypothesis
		H4: Offering the required training through a shared training service within AZF helps train staff with frequent updates on their pedagogical skills by the already existing specialised staff at AA.	strong link (87.8%)	same as hypothesis
		H3 confirmatory question: Offering training services through a shared training service within AZF motivates training qualified staff members from AZF to enhance and exchange their experience and knowledge.	strong link (81.8%)	same as hypothesis
		H4 confirmatory question: Offering high-quality training through a shared training service within AZF helps training staff to increase their self-confidence, which consequently will be reflected in their levels of professionalism.	strong link (77%)	same as hypothesis
3	Quality of Service	H5: Centralising the training services within AZF helps in affecting training with the desired QoS, which is supported by the already available resources and expertise.	strong link (83.8%)	same as hypothesis
		H6: Offering the required training through a shared training service within AZF helps in monitoring the QoS. Based on the granted authority, decisions can be taken to control the quality.	strong link (77%)	same as hypothesis
		H5 confirmatory Question: Offering the required training through a shared training service within AZF using modern pedagogy ensures effective delivery methods.	strong link (84.3%)	same as hypothesis
		H6 confirmatory question: Based on the well-known brand of AZF, offering training services through a shared training service within AZF motivates the management to offer required support to the training centre, which affects the level of professionalism of the trainers from AZF.	strong link (82.9%)	same as hypothesis
4	Environment	H7: Centralising the training services within AZF ensures that a proper environment and enough resources are provided for the training.	strong link (80.5%)	same as hypothesis
		H8: Offering the required training through a shared training service within AZF confirms that safety considerations and disaster recovery are provided at high standards, which are already available and certified in AZF.	strong link (80.1%)	same as hypothesis
		H7 confirmatory question: AZF has a proper training environment. Centralising the training services within AZF offers real opportunities for success to AZF business.	strong link (82%)	same as hypothesis
		H8 confirmatory question: Considering venue, furniture, air conditioning, safety exits, fire fighting, and other environmental factors, centralising training services within AZF presents a great opportunity for success.	strong link (77.2%)	same as hypothesis
5	Training Cost	H9: Centralising the training services within AZF ensures lower costs, especially when considering using the available resources in AZF, including human resources and facilities.	strong link (88%)	same as hypothesis
		H10: Offering the required training through a shared training service within AZF saves a lot of time and effort, which makes it easier for staff members to follow their work from a closer location.	strong link (77.2%)	same as hypothesis
		H9 confirmatory question: Centralising the training services within AZF helps to best allocate the AZF resources and leverage the generated business value.	strong link (77.5%)	same as hypothesis
		H10 confirmatory question: Centralising the training services within AZF helps to reduce the absenteeism ratio in training and consequently better achieves its objectives.	Strong link (75.2%)	same as hypothesis

7. Findings From the Data Analysis of the Second Survey

To analyse the collected data in this study, we consider aggregate responses of less than 50% as a weak link that disproves the hypothesis, while aggregate responses equal to or above 50% tend to prove the hypothesis.

Table 8   Factors Analysis — Part 2

No	Factors	Hypothesised link with centralising training services within AZF	Result from analysis	Compared with hypotheses
11	Training topics	strong link	strong link	same as hypothesis
22	Instructor professionalism	strong link	strong link	same as hypothesis
33	Quality of service	strong link	strong link	same as hypothesis
44	Environment	strong link	strong link	same as hypothesis
55	Training cost	strong link	strong link	same as hypothesis

The strong link between the training topics and the centralisation of training services was hypothesised based on the sense of making training more specialised and concentrated. The strong link in this case means the more we centralise training within the organisation, the more focus we place on the offered topic(s). The findings were similar based on the data collected using different methods. The results of Survey 2 confirmed the above results. Of the surveyed sample, 71.4% agreed that centralising training services in AZF helps monitor training topics that seem more related to the running business areas. The interviews with staff confirmed this; four interviewees also talked about creating new collaboration between the trainers and trainees from different business units, which reflects on the chosen topics and even extends to innovation on several topics.

Level of instruction led to similar results; four interviewees agreed that frequent training tasks could promote the level of instructor professionalism through interaction during training. This empowers the instructor and makes him/her more specialised with strong knowledge of AZF business and systems. Although four staff members argued that the external trainers come with strong experience developed from their access to many users in a variety of businesses, it appears that instructor professionalism level rises if he is more dedicated to the organisation and collects his experience in one business context.

The QoS was also hypothesised to increase with a narrow focus of offered topics, which creates a correlation between QoS and centralisation of training services. This relationship was hypothesised to have a strong link and was developed based on the findings from this study. This creates a real opportunity for an organisation to seek better quality training through centralising training.

The link between the training environment and the centralisation of training services was also hypothesised as strong, especially in an organization(s) with sufficient facilities or resources for training while engaging in the offered topics. Especially at AZF, the available resources and facilities include equipment, devices, buildings, safety factors, and accommodated venues to offer and exercise the desired training. Aspetar hospital is fully equipped to support any medical training, and proper playgrounds and playgrounds are also equipped for sports training. Academic facilities like classrooms, technology-testing labs, and resource centres are also available. So it was hypothesised that centralising training services within AZF has a strong link with the training environment. Findings from the research tools were similar.

The last hypothesis involved a strong link between centralisation of training services and the cost of training. This hypothesis is based on the sense of saving time to move to another training organisation, saving

transportation fees and effort, saving time when exploring non-core or not-required topics, and saving money required to engage in the training topics at allocated facilities.

In summary, centralising training services within AZF has the potential to enhance training services in terms of selected topics, instructor professionalism, QoS, training environment, and training cost.

8. Recommendations

This study began by diagnosing the current situation of training services in AZF through a survey, document analysis, and interviews to highlight the clear problems that face trainees and organisations in receiving potential benefits from training. Then it included analysis of each studied factor and its effect when centralising training services in AZF. These two steps helped the researcher to define a clear gap in the literature and accordingly define a research methodology to centralise training services in AZF to effectively leverage training outcomes. The research findings point to the following recommendations:

1) There is an ample room for:
- Applying the research methodology to larger organisations to generalise the research findings to the wider domain and reflect on its outcomes.
- enhancing the research on service centralisation within multi-business organisations.
- studying each factor to analyse their effects on centralising training services in different business organisations.
- researchers to explore and document the centralisation and decentralisation issues and their impact on training in different business contexts.
2) There is vast potential to centralise training services in AZF to harness the positive effects of collaboration in developing user-centred training and consequently achieving the potential value of business.

Future studies could be also conducted in Qatar to support its overall economy and businesses. Further studies can be extended to other countries or businesses.

9. Limitations of the Research

Some limitations of this research findings arise from the proposed hypotheses due to a lack of proper training environment and resources: infrastructure requirements for creating the recommended AZF training centre. Organisational support for the training centre is the practical validation of the research findings. So the following limitations should be considered before creating the new AZF training centre:
- "Facilitating conditions" is one of the main use factors and is considered to be extremely important when starting a centralised training centre. So proper infrastructure and technology tools should be provided.
- Solid management support is required to establish effective training policies and procedures that can be applied to the different business units. This support works as an upper umbrella to sponsor the training centre.
- Proper support from Aspire Academy with pedagogical consultation and expertise means that professional development might be required for the instructors on course delivery and assessment strategies.

- Permission from AZF management is necessary to use its brand name to conduct training partnerships and release professional training documentation and certification.
- This research was conducted within AZF and with AZF staff members. Expanding the domain outside AZF business and boundaries could use the same research methodology.

Acknowledgements

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Appendices

About Aspire Zone Foundation (AZF)

AA has become an important international sports destination in Qatar since its creation in 2003. It has been recognised as a promising sports academy worldwide. AA hosted major sports events such as the Asian Games in 2006. In 2008 the government of Qatar made AA the parent foundation of Aspire Zone, which is now known as AZF. AZF comprises three business units: AT, AL, and AA.

AZF's mission focuses on enhancing sports performance in the country by developing young student-athletes' sports talents and promoting a healthy lifestyle for the Qatari community.

AT, which began its operations in 2007, ensures that all athletes can perform to the best of their potential by providing the right medical care. In 2009, AT was acknowledged as a FIFA Medical Centre of Excellence.

AL is responsible for all logistical assistance, including the management of international sports events, building sports stadia and venues for AZF, catering and hospitality, and infrastructure services.

Established in 2003, AA offers a variety of sports and educational programs and has been recognised as one of the elite sports academies in the world. The sports department in the academy is responsible for preparing young athletes for professional and rewarding careers in their chosen sport. Experienced and knowledgeable coaches and specialists are recruited to Aspire from the most renowned sports institutions all over the world. They are assisted by state-of-the-art equipment, technology, facility infrastructure, resources, and support provided by specialists to maximise the potential of the athletes. AA has local sports science programs which provide students and coaches alike with international applied sports science support, such as tests, assessment, research, specialised laboratories, and equipment. Student-athletes have the opportunity to travel overseas for competitions and training purposes. They get experience by performing in unfamiliar environments and conditions, adapting to new cultures, and improving their sports performance levels.

In addition to the sports development of the young athletes, AA also caters to its student-athletes' academic needs and studies. AA's vision aims at developing "highly educated youth athletes, leaders and lifelong learners". It strives to provide the student-athletes with a high-quality education and the skills required for the 21st century mind-set. The school also offers a balance between sports and students' education by providing a responsive and flexible educational environment. Finally, the academy is committed to maximising the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual development of all student-athletes. In order to achieve its mission and strategic goals, AZF recruits specialists in sports, education, medicine, health science, and sports science. It also offers a variety of training programs related to specialisation and work needs. AZF allocates a huge budget and support to provide professional development and keep its staff updated as to the latest expertise and knowledge levels.