PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS FOR HUMAN RESOURCE PROFESSIONALS

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Declaration

I certify that I am the author of this project and that any assistance I received in its

preparation is fully acknowledged and disclosed in this project. I have also cited any source from

which I have used data, ideas, or words, either quoted or directly paraphrased. I also certify that

this paper was prepared by me specifically for this course.

No portion of the work referred to in this study has been submitted in support of an

application for another degree or qualification to this or any other university or institution of

learning.

Abeer Pirzada   January 20, 2015
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Student Name   Signature   Date

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Abstract

The evolution of the human resource management (HRM) function over the years has led to increased expectations from HR professionals to act as strategic business partners. This study explores the perceived importance of industry related technical knowledge and skills for HR professionals working in engineering and IT industries in Canada and Pakistan from the perspective of HR professionals as well as technical managers. This is an exploratory collective case study in which the HR professionals in technical industries within Pakistan and Canada have been used as bounded systems within which the study is conducted. This study found a lot of similarities between Canada and Pakistan regarding perceived importance of technical knowledge and skills for HR professionals as well as confirming findings from earlier studies on the strategic role of HRM.

Introduction

If human resource management (HRM) is to survive as a function and as a profession, then human resources (HR) professionals should take control of where they want to go and what they want to achieve. To that end, they must provide the type of services demanded by their customers and try to connect with them by treating the customer's agenda as their own (McKee, 1997).

Human resources have moved from its traditional functions of recruitment, training, and performance evaluation towards a more strategic role. Businesses have realized that having capable workers in the company is a source of competitive advantage. There is an increased expectation from the human resources department to act as a strategic partner in attaining this competitive advantage (Wielemaker& Flint, 2005).

According to Rowden, (2002), another source of competitive advantage for a firm is its culture and values. Positive culture and traditions within an organization provide employees a set of behaviours that is expected of them. The HR department can promote this message through human resource policies and practices that are in line with the culture of the organization. HRM can also promote positive culture through selection of suitable individuals who fit with the organizational culture. This is another way in which HRM can be a source of competitive advantage for the organization

This brings us to the question that if the HR department is to act as a strategic partner in determining the direction of the business, how important it is for HR professionals to understand the company's business? In particular, in highly technical fields –like engineering or information technology – how important is it for HR professionals to possess knowledge related to that field?

Is this technical knowledge helpful to them in their job or is the core knowledge of human resource functions sufficient for them to work effectively in any industry? If they do not possess technical knowledge and skills, how do they compensate for this deficiency? This study engages with these questions (formal research questions for this study are given on page 20 in the Methods section of the report).

This thesis is based on a qualitative study that investigates the perceived importance of technical knowledge and skills for human resource professionals. This study investigates whether possessing technical knowledge and skills related to the industry is beneficial for human resource professionals in performing their tasks, and whether it affects job performance in human resources and their interaction with other employees in the company. Additionally, this research explores whether there are the cross-cultural differences between Pakistan and Canada related to the perceived importance of these technical knowledge and skills. This is a novel area of research because there are no known studies investigating the perceived importance of technical knowledge and skills for HR professionals and there is scarcely any literature available on the subject.

Purpose

Through this research, the aim is to understand the impact that technical knowledge and skills has on the job performance of HR professionals. Another objective of this study is to clarify the knowledge and skill requirements for HR professionals. This will be useful for people who are responsible for hiring HR professionals in organizations. Sometimes there is a complaint that if members of the HR staff are unaware of the technical side of business, how can they recruit, evaluate and manage the technical resources that are part of the company or how can

they contribute to the business side of the company effectively? The aim is to try to shed some light on this issue and to explore how important technical skills and knowledge are for HR professionals.

Another objective is to gauge the importance of the understanding the technical side of business by HR professionals and what level of understanding, knowledge and skill of this technical side is required by HR professionals in order to perform their job efficiently and effectively. The research aim is also to understand whether having a technical background in terms of education or experience can positively influence the performance of HR professionals working in technical fields such as engineering or healthcare. Furthermore, as recommended by Huselid, Jackson, and Shuler (1997) efforts were made to understand the perspective of the stakeholders in this study by including people who work in close coordination with the HR department, such as line managers.

Cultural Context

Pakistani and Canadian cultures vary a great deal in a number of ways. This can be shown by using Geert Hofstede's tool of cultural comparison. This tool compares cultures of different countries through six separate criterions. These are power distance**,** individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, pragmatism and indulgence (Hofstede, Hofstede &Minkov, 2010). Although there is some debate as to whether or not individualism and collectivism are the inverse of each other or whether they are orthogonal dimensions (Gelfand, Triandis, & Chan, 1996) but if we compare the two cultures on the basis of individualism and collectivism through this cultural comparison tool, we notice that:

Pakistan, with a very low score of 14 [on the individualism dimension], is considered a collectivistic society. This is manifest in a close long-term commitment to the member 'group', be that a family, extended family, or extended relationships. Loyalty in a collectivist culture is paramount, and over-rides most other societal rules and regulations. The society fosters strong relationships where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group. In collectivist societies offence leads to shame and loss of face, employer/employee relationships are perceived in moral terms (like a family link), hiring and promotion decisions take account of the employee's in-group, management is the management of groups. (Hofstede, n.d.a)

Canada scores 80 on this dimension [individualism], (its highest dimension score) and can be characterized as an individualistic culture. Similar to its American neighbor [sic] to the south, this translates into a loosely-knit society in which the expectation is that people look after themselves and their immediate families. Similarly, in the business world, employees are expected to be self-reliant and display initiative. Also, within the exchange-based world of work, hiring and promotion decisions are based merit or evidence of what one has done or can do. (Hofstede, n.d.b)

Table 1 provides an overview of the comparison of all six cross-cultural dimensions.

	Pakistan	Canada	Interpretation
Table 1: Comparison of Pakistan and Canada across Six Dimension of Cross-Cultural Characteristics			
Power Distance	55	39	Pakistan has a somewhat higher score implying that Pakistanis are more likely to believe that power is distributed unequally as compared to Canadians
Individualism	14	80	Pakistan has a low score of 14 meaning it is a collectivist society as compared to Canada which has a quite high score indicating a more individualistic society
Masculinity	50	52	A high score (masculinity) means a society driven by competition and success while a low score (femininity) means a society with care for others. Both Pakistani and Canadian societies are quite neutral as the scores reflect and do not have a particular trend in this dimension
Uncertainty Avoidance	70	48	Pakistan's high score in this dimension means a society with high uncertainty avoidance. These societies are usually rigid in beliefs and intolerant of unconventional ideas. Canadian society on the other hand has a lower level of uncertainty avoidance as compared to Pakistan and can be classified as more tolerant of unconventional ideas
Pragmatism	50	36	High score on this dimension means a society where people believe that everything around them cannot be explained. Pakistan has a high score than Canada but still a score of 50 is neutral and does not indicate a particular trend
Indulgence	0	68	This dimension highlights the extent to which people try to control their desires. Pakistan with an extremely low score of zero can be classified as a very restrained society. Canadian culture on the other hand can be classified as more indulgent with a score of 68

(Hofstede, n.d.a & Hofstede, n.d.b.)

Literature Review

The HR function is at different stages of development across the globe. It appears to be more developed in the European and US markets than it is in Asia. Although in the past twenty years or so, HRM has developed quite steadily in Asia; still it is far behind Europe or US in terms of development and standard practices. There is a lot of difference between how HRM as a function is currently being practiced in Asia and how it should be (de Guzman, Neelankavil & Sengupta, 2011). This difference in the development and practice of HRM as a function across the world could have an impact on the demands placed on HRM by the management of the organization. In more developed markets such as North America, HR's role could be clearer and more defined as compared to the less developed Asian market and as a result expectations of management from HRM could be quite different.

The type of role performed by HR professionals in any organization could differ from company to company. This diversity could also be true for the role played by HRM in business strategy as well as it could decide HR's effectiveness and contribution in various functions such as recruitment, performance evaluations or training & development. Valverde, Ryan & Soler, 2006 found that the distribution of HRM activities or the decision of who performs what job role differs from company to company. The arrangement and setting of HR department in each organization is unique but it is possible to discern common themes and patterns among different companies which in turn can lead to the identification of models or patterns according to which HRM activities are distributed in organizations. The choice of the type of model of HR that each company chooses to operate with can be chosen by the company. This model is not dictated by

organizational factors but rather it is the choice of the company regarding which type of model they want to use.

Changing role of Human Resource department:

The whole objective of HR knowledge is its relevance to the overall business strategy of the organization. Functions of HR, such as recruitment, training and development and compensation should be geared towards achieving the objectives on which the overall business strategy is based. The criteria driving HRM knowledge should be the needs of the business as described in the business strategy. It is also argued that the most important aspect of HRM knowledge is the use of HRM and general management competencies and aligns these with the overall business strategy (Tyson, 1999).

The importance of the human resource function is growing due to challenging demands of today's business. HRM is becoming increasingly important nowadays due to growing knowledge based economies and is gaining importance due to the fact that good human resource management practices lead to efficiency in production as well as enhance the quality of life in the society. Careful management of human resources can lead to success in achieving business objectives and also to increased understanding of other areas of business as well (Abduli, 2013, p. 169).

Boselie and Paauwe (2005) also discussed the changing dynamic of HR's role from merely a staffing function to that business manager. HRM is now typically part of the management team and there is a need for those involved in HRM to make an effective contribution towards the organization's success. Their results found that there is a positive relation between human resource function's credibility and performance delivery with the

ranking of HRM in the organization. They also argue that those working within HRM found business knowledge to be crucial for a firm's financial performance whereas those working outside HR found investment in human resource technology as having negative impact on firm's financial performance. They did not consider investment in HR technology to be a sound investment.

Crouse, Doyle & Young (2011) also reported a changing role for human resource department. They found the increased involvement of HRM in strategic decision of the organization to be a major trend. According to them, when the HR manager is part of top management and is expected to make a significant contribution towards strategic decisions, it is imperative that they possess knowledge of tools and skills used in such decision making. There is evidence that strategic HRM affects firm performance; however HR professionals tend to take more traditional (technical HR) roles and may be perceived by others in the organization to have less proficiency regarding business capabilities (the strategic aspect of their role) (Huselid, et al., 1997). Taken together, it is suggested that the role of HRM is evolving, but perhaps has not reached maturation.

According to de Guzman, Neelankavil & Sengupta (2011), at this moment although HRM is shifting towards a more strategic role, it is still not considered strategically important. According to them, HRM at the moment is performing more of a support role in strategy development rather than being an active participant. This is true for even some of the biggest corporations in the world. Keeping this scenario in mind, there could be a case for HR professionals receiving special training to enable them to perform a more active strategic role.

The changing role of HR department within organizations highlights the issue of technical knowledge and skills that may contribute to the general business operations. This leads to the question of whether or not the possession of such knowledge helps HR professionals in establishing themselves as strategic business partners.

HR as Strategic Business Partner:

Keegan & Francis (2010) suggest that HRM as a function and the tasks performed by HR have evolved with the passage of time. Now the term HR business partner has emerged to highlight this evolution. HRM acting as a business partner has redefined the functions and activities performed by HR professionals.

According to Han, Chou, Chao, & Wright (2006) despite of the fact that that HRM as a business partner makes a lot of sense, most of the existing HR competencies are focused on behavioral attributes and general skills for HR professionals rather than looking ahead and helping them grow as business partners in specific organizational situations. These competencies are more geared towards general situations rather than providing guidance on how to effectively perform as a business partner in specific organizational situations. To make matters worse, most of these competency models are do not provide any mechanism to measure actual performance. This in turn could lead to misunderstandings between HRM and the line managers regarding HRM's effectiveness as a business partner.

Van Eynde and Burr (2011) recommended the need to teach non-HR managers some of the knowledge and skills from HR. They argued that it would provide them with better understanding of HR function. One of the areas was the strategic role of HRM,

Our experts also thought it important to teach non-HR managers the Role of HRM in Business Strategy. In this arena the Council members were not looking for a deep and comprehensive understanding of the HR function. Rather, what they sought here was a broad understanding by non-HR managers of how to use HR as a business partner and the impact of Human Resources on the business of the organization (Van Eynde & Burr, 2011, p. 72).

Some people may argue that in the light of the above statement the converse may also be true. If non-HR managers can enhance their understanding and benefit from being taught HRM knowledge and skills, then HR professionals will also benefit from the increased understanding provided to them if they have the technical knowledge and skills. Research by Huselid et al. (1997) suggests that although HRM is seen as having lower strategic capacity, investments in human resources may be a source of competitive advantage and the development of business capabilities in HR professionals should be encouraged.

Gannon, Doherty & Roper (2012) identified three different approaches to strategic human resource management. These approaches range from company level (resource-based view; RBV) to industry level (best practice). These highlight the importance of the link of HRM to strategy. Strategic human resource management can be a source of competitive advantage for an organization. But in order to create and sustain this competitive advantage, it is necessary to determine how important it is that the technical knowledge of the organization's business is possessed by the human resource personnel? Can they act as strategic partners in an organization without these knowledge and skills? Can they be successful in contributing effectively to an organization's strategy by just using the body of knowledge and skills relevant to HRM?

According to Guest & Conway (2011), the effectiveness of HR department in an organization is evaluated using different criterion by both line managers and top management. Line managers focus more on operational level support provided by the HR department whereas top management pays more attention to strategic side of business and contribution of HRM towards that side.

Scholars have also argued that HR professionals make a conscious effort to adapt to their environment in a favorable way. They seek ways and means of making their surroundings more suitable by acquiring the skills needed for survival and to make favorable deals for themselves. These scholars argue that HR professionals have agreed to play the strategic role so that it can maintain its hold and power which it would not have maintained otherwise (Labedz & Lee, 2011). This situation begs the question whether HR professionals working in the technical fields such as engineering or information technology adopt any strategies to overcome their lack of technical knowledge and background.

HRM and Development of Human Capital:

Human capital refers to the productivity of people in the same way as productivity of machinery, land or other resources. According to human capital theory, investment can be made in human beings in order to reap rewards in the future. This investment is a painstaking process, but investment in human capital has been source of economic progress to modern economies around the world (Langelett, 2002). The concept of human capital highlights the notion of effective human resource management because it considers individuals as the most important element in the success of an organization. It stresses the fact that an organization can achieve success only through development of capable and competent individuals (Condrey, 2010).

Successful management of human capital can serve to act as a key success factor for the organization, which has led to many organizations to implement human capital measures. Human capital plays a vital role in performance and value creation within an organization. Previous research has indicated the importance of implementing human capital measures as part of the strategic performance management system within an organization. In their role of strategic business partner, HR professionals should be able to develop, support and implement the strategic human capital measures in an organization (Gates & Langevin, 2010).

Human capital in the market undergoes changes with the passage of time. Attracting and selecting human capital that matches the strategic goals of the organization is not an easy task. Fully utilizing the capabilities of human capital existing within the organizations is a major area of research in organizational psychology. There is a belief that maximum utilization of human capital can be of immense benefit to both the organization and the individual. Research in the fields of psychology and strategic HRM has supported this belief and has proved that investment in human capital can be beneficial for organizational as well as individual performance (Crook, Todd, Woehr, Combs & Ketchen, 2011).

Huselid, et al., (1997) point out that in accordance with resource based view of the firm; human capital within a company can be leveraged to provide sustainable competitive advantage for that firm. If human capital could be geared to add maximum value to business processes and if the skills possessed by a firm's human capital are difficult to imitate, it will result in a sustainable competitive advantage. HRM can contribute towards this by recruiting and training employees with exceptional abilities and on the strategic side, by ensuring HRM practices of the company are difficult to imitate for its competitors.

Keeping in view the importance of human capital for companies, HR professionals working in technical field can be a source of human capital for the organization. This could be especially true in cases where HR professionals demonstrate understanding of the business of the company. This could also help HR professionals in managing firm's human capital and utilizing it as a source of sustainable competitive advantage for the organization as part of strategic HRM. This view is supported by Huselid, et al., (1997) who found strong link between strategic HRM effectiveness and employee productivity.

Methods

Philosophical Approach:

This is a qualitative study using a social constructivist philosophical approach (Creswell, 2009). The research involves an exploratory study that strives to understand the importance of technical knowledge and skills for human resource professionals. It explored this topic from the perspective of those working as part of HR departments in various organizations and also those who work in close collaboration with HR professionals, such as technical people in middle management positions.

A social constructivist approach is suitable for this study as it relies on participants' views and understanding of situations they experience. Individuals ascribe meaning to their experiences and interactions in order to understand these experiences. This approach is suitable for a qualitative study and researchers can use open-ended questions to fully capture the experiences of participants. Researchers can analyze the data collected from interaction with participants and generate meaning from this data (Creswell, 2009). A social constructivist approach is also suitable as this topic is yet to be fully explored and little previous research is available on this topic. Therefore, it will be helpful in developing and understanding meaning through the data that has been collected during the course of this study, "rather than starting with a theory (as in post positivism), inquirers generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning" (Creswell, 2009, p. 08).

Role of the Researcher

Having worked in an engineering and software development firms as part of their human resource department, this research is of particular interest to me both as a researcher and as human resource professional. I have an educational background in economics and also a business degree. During my work experience as part of a firm working in the engineering sector, I came across numerous situations where I felt not possessing a technical background in terms of my education and work hindered my communication with technical employees. I also felt that there was an increased expectation and demand from the management that HRM should contribute towards strategic side of the business. I also got the feeling while interacting with technical professionals such as engineers that there was a misunderstanding regarding the role of HR amongst them. Most of them had this notion that if HR professionals do not possess technical knowledge or background, how can they recruit, evaluate and perform other HRM functions in an organization where majority of employees are technical.

My motivation behind this study is to explore the perceived importance of technical knowledge and skills for HR professionals both from the perspective of HR professionals as well as from that of technical managers working in collaboration with HR department. Keeping in view my own experience, I have tried to explore the ways and means that HR professionals apply to understand the technical side of the business and perform the strategic role demanded by the management.

Having prior experience in the field of HRM as part of a technical firm, this exposure may have coloured the lens through which I view this research and the research questions. My interest in this research arose from a desire to answer questions that may be based on my

experience. I have not taken the extreme inductive position in which the researcher goes in the field with minimal literature knowledge and tries to connect the data with the literature after or during the analysis.

This is where a social constructivist approach is also suitable as in this approach, the researchers, with their own background can position themselves in the research in order to experience how meaning is provided to their own historical experiences and background. The intention of researcher is to understand and interpret the meaning of others about different aspects (Creswell, 2009).

Research Design

The design used for this research is a multiple case study, which "involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system" (Creswell, 2007a, p. 73). This is an exploratory collective case study in which the HR professions in technical industries within Pakistan and Canada have been used as bounded systems within which the study is conducted. According to Creswell, (2007a), this type of case study has one issue or concern but multiple cases are used to highlight this issue, "the multiple case study uses logic of replication, in which the inquirer replicates the procedures for each case" (Creswell, 2007a, p. 74).

During this study, a total of 18 interviews (twelve in Canada and six in Pakistan) were conducted at the individual level with HR professionals as well as technical managers who work in close collaboration with HR professionals. For this study, data was collected from HR and technical professionals working in the engineering, mining, and information technology sectors of Pakistan and Canada. As these interviews were conducted with professional from both Pakistan and Canada, they were put together and the HR professionals of Pakistan and Canada

are treated as two groups. The engineering & Information Technology (IT) industries of Pakistan and Canada have been used as two bounded systems within which the professionals working in these two industries have been analyzed as two cases. As Creswell (2007a), pointed out that this is one of the highlights of a collective or multiple case study as it enables the researcher to select multiple cases in order to fully highlight the problem at hand. Designing a case study has also enabled us to compare and contrast our findings from both cultures by and identifying the data for common themes between both of these countries.

Research Questions

The main research question of this study is: *What is the perceived importance of technical knowledge and skills for HR professionals?* As this is a cross-cultural study between Pakistan and Canada, these questions have been considered from both cultural perspectives. The specific research questions that have been explored during this study are:

i. What part does technical knowledge and skills play in a new strategic role of HR?

ii. What is the impact of possessing or not possessing technical knowledge and skills on job performance of HR professionals?

iii. What is the impact of possessing or not possessing technical knowledge and skills on understanding and connecting with stakeholders of HR department i.e. the technical managers and employees of the organization?

iv. What is the impact of possessing or not possessing technical knowledge and skills on career development of HR professionals?

v. What is the impact of possessing or not possessing technical knowledge and skills on role of HR as a business partner?

vi.   What are some of the strategies that HR professionals use to compensate for their lack of technical knowledge or work experience in a technical field?

vii.   What is the difference between perceived importance of technical knowledge and skills between Canadian and Pakistani industry?

Methodology

Sample

This research is an exploratory study as there is very little earlier work done on this particular topic and there is no previous study exploring the importance of technical knowledge and skills for HR professionals. Participants in this study are adults; between the ages of 22 and 60. Two specific groups of participants have been included:

1. Human Resource professionals, who are currently working or have the experience of working in the field of HR,

2. Managers in the organizations who work in close coordination with HR department.

   The participants have been divided into four groups:

   i)   HR professionals working in Pakistan. This group included 3 male participants between the ages of 25-40. Two of the participants were working in engineering and one in IT industry in Pakistan.

   ii)   Technical managers working in Pakistan. This group included 3 male participants between the ages of 30-50. All three participants were working in engineering industry in Pakistan.

iii)   HR professionals working in Canada. This group included 1 male and 5 female participants between the ages of 22-50. Three of the participants were working in engineering and three in IT industry in Canada.

iv)   Technical managers working in Canada. This group included 5 male and 1 female participants between the ages of 30-60. All participants were working in engineering sector in Canada.

Data Collection

Data was collected through a series of face-to-face interviews with the participants or in some cases where the interviewer and interviewee are at different physical locations, the interviews were conducted through telephone and Skype. These interviews were semi-structured and took place in a single session that lasted between 25-45 minutes. The total number of participants in this study is 18. This study included 12 participants from Canada including 6 HR professionals and 6 technical managers. There were 6 participants from Pakistan with 3 HR professionals and 3 technical managers. One session was conducted with each participant. The interviews were recorded with prior permission from the participants. The interview questions were kept open ended so that participants could fully share their opinion and experiences in a comprehensive manner. The interview guide for HR professionals is provided in Appendix A and the interview guide for non-HR managers is provided in Appendix B.

As Urdu is the national language of Pakistan, the interview questions were also translated into Urdu and translated back to English to ensure the consistency of meaning in the questions. The researcher translated the questions into Urdu and another individual fluent in English and Urdu translated them back into English. Any issues with the translation were corrected and checked. This was done to facilitate participants from Pakistan who maybe more comfortable

talking in Urdu. Participants from Pakistan were given a choice of language at the start of the interview.

Recruitment

Purposive sampling was used because specific individuals were targeted based on their membership in a particular group (Wilson, 2010). Participants for this study were recruited mostly through professional networking. Participants were contacted through phone or email and informed about the purpose of this research. They were asked for an appointment for an interview session and interview was conducted on the mutually agreed date and time at a location of the participants' choice and convenience. Participants in Canada were given $10 Tim Hortons gift cards as a token of appreciation for their participation in the study.

Participants were required to provide informed consent prior to participation. There was no potential for physical harm to participants during this study. There is also minimal chance of damage to reputation. There was the potential of some participants feeling uncomfortable while discussing their knowledge base and they type of knowledge about their field that they may or may not possess but none of the participants in this study explicitly stated any such concern. There was also the potential risk of some participants also feeling that findings of this study can potentially harm their career prospects in terms of them not possessing certain knowledge or skills. This risk was reduced by assuring the participants of complete confidentiality regarding their identity. Real names have not been used at all, and other identifying information has also been removed from any reports. Participants also had the complete freedom to withdraw at any stage of the study if they felt uncomfortable. Participants were given the option of choosing the location of the interview. Most of the interviews were conducted outside of the participants' workplace in order to protect their privacy and any impact on their job or career prospects unless

the participant wished it to be at the workplace. A copy of the consent form is provided in Appendix C.

Data Analysis

As the data was collected in semi-structured interviews, data collected during interviews was transcribed during the first phase of data analysis. After that, data collected from interviews was arranged and coded. Coding helped in identifying categories and sub categories of data (Wilson, 2010). Emergent (inductive) coding was used for the data since no theoretical lens was used to frame the research. Data was divided into bits for analysis. These bits were analyzed for emergent themes and these themes were coded. Next step was axial coding of the data was used to identify common themes both within and across the participant groups. The first step was to conduct a within case theme analysis to look for and understand the important themes emerging from the data. Both the cases of Pakistan and Canada were analyzed separately for themes. Next step was to conduct a cross case analysis to identify common and divergent themes emerging from both cultures (Creswell, 2007a).

Dependability and Consistency of Data

Several steps were taken in order to ensure dependability and consistency of data (Creswell, 2007b). High quality recording equipment was selected to record the interviews. Two separate recorders were used during the interviews to ascertain that no part of interview was missed in case of equipment malfunction. Background noise cancellation option was activated on recording equipment to ensure that everything the participants said was clearly captured without background noise disturbance. Participants were given the choice of deciding the time and place of the interviews so that they feel completely at ease and can express their opinions with minimal distraction or disturbance. Questions were kept open ended to make sure the participants

expressed their opinion freely and without any bias that researcher may have. Participants were

not made aware of researcher's background and work experience as HR professional in order to

get an unbiased perception.

Findings

There was considerable consistency and similarity in the responses of the participants in both countries. In the interest of parsimony, the analysis of data from HR professionals in both countries was compared under Perspective 1 and the analysis from the technical managers is presented in Perspective 2.

Four major themes emerged from Perspective 1. First of these themes dealt with the HR's role as a strategic business partner and the impact of technical knowledge and skills on this role. Second major theme emerging from Perspective 1 was the impact of technical knowledge and skills on job performance of HR professionals as well as on their ability to connect with technical managers. The third theme discusses some of the strategies used by HR professionals to overcome a lack of technical background in terms of their education or work experience. The fourth and final major theme to emerge from Perspective 1 was the impact of technical knowledge and skills on career development of HR professionals.

Similarly in Perspective 2, there were two major themes that emerged. First was the impact of technical knowledge and skills on HR professional's ability to understand and connect with technical managers. The second major theme from this perspective was the impact of technical knowledge and skills on job performance of HR professional in view of technical managers.

Perspective 1: HR Professionals in Canada and Pakistan

1.1 Impact of Technical Knowledge and Skills on the role of HR as Strategic and Business partner

During the course of this study, some evidence was uncovered of the strategic role performed by HR departments in both Canada and Pakistan. Some participants indicated a demand by top management for HR to participate in strategic and business level decisions; however, the degree of involvement in decision-making was unclear. Participants from both Canada and Pakistan confirmed the presence of members of HR in top management meetings to discuss business strategy; however, there was a strong indication that the role of HR is merely that of a support group in most cases. Participants commented that strategic direction comes from the top management and HRM is limited to developing policies and procedure in light of that direction. One interesting point arising out of this discussion was the size and management structure of the company and its relationship with the role of HR in contributing to business strategy. Participants in Canada were of the opinion that HRM is playing a more active role in devising business strategy and acting as a business partner in large, public listed companies as compared to smaller or medium sized enterprises. There was similar evidence in Pakistan also where participants talked about large multinational companies treating HR as a strategic business partner as compared to local companies. One of the participants interviewed in Canada from IT industry confirmed the presence of HR in top level meetings but was unsure their role and the expectations of top management from HR:

> [the] HR manager sits in the meetings. I do not know to what extent the demand
> [for HR to be involved in strategic side of business] is there but she is part of the
> meetings (P3, HR, IT, Canada)

Similarly a participant from Pakistan from the engineering industry also confirmed the presence of HR at top level meetings but was unsure of the influence and decision making authority that HR possesses at these meetings. According to one of the participants:

[the] Head of HR is present during strategic discussions between top management but it is mostly a passive role instead of an active role. I am not sure HR has sufficient influence at this moment to really impact strategic decision making (P2, HR, Engineering, Pakistan)

One participant interviewed in Canada from IT industry confirmed increasing role of HR as a strategic business partner but under direction from top management. The participant also argued that it was due to the organizational structure of the company rather than technical knowledge:

We do experience quite a high turnover so now they are looking at what ways can we make people happier and stay longer. So HR in that sense is becoming a little bit more strategic but that direction also is coming from top management. They participate in management meetings but do not necessarily have the power to devise strategy. Part of the reason is that we are a family owned company. For publically listed companies, I believe HR plays a more important role in terms of strategy and management (P2, HR, IT, Canada)

Another participant from IT industry in Canada also expressed similar notion that the strategic role of HR is dependent upon size and structure of the organization and also that at the moment HR is sometimes reduced to performing clerical tasks and paperwork.

It is a fairly small company. I would say in this organization HR is more of a

supportive function. They take direction from upper management and do more

administrative things like onboarding, benefits administration, and payroll. It's

not a strategic function as it might be in a larger organization but I don't feel it is

because of HR's knowledge or skill set. I think it is more a case of top

management keeping power for them (P1, HR, IT, Canada)

Participants in both Canada and Pakistan were generally of the opinion that HR is not

playing an active enough role in strategic management and that this difference is due to HR

failing to establish its worth in the eyes of top management at local companies rather than

technical knowledge or skills. However, consistent with previous research (Paauwe, 2009),

participants from both cultures concurred that it would be financially prudent for businesses to

involve HR in strategic planning, specifically in terms of workforce planning and recruitment.

One participant from engineering industry in Pakistan lamented the fact that HR departments in

their company have been unable to highlight the importance of their role as a business partner:

If you look at multinational companies working in Pakistan, like Nestle or any of

the telecommunication companies, you will see they have a specific designation

called HR Business Partner. In our company there is no concept of that. HR is

part of management meetings but they do not provide any valuable input. I don't

know if this is a weakness from HR or the top management [is] reluctant to

empower HR. In my personal opinion, rather than the absence of technical

knowledge, it is just that HR in this organization has failed to make top

management realize it's worth (P1, HR, Engineering, Pakistan)

According to one participant in engineering industry in Canada, involving HRM in business decisions can result in increased efficiency in the areas of recruitment and employee training.

> [the] strategic role of HR comes from a combined effort. For example if we wanted to do a project in Indonesia… In our industry, it takes a lot of time to get one sale made…If we have a sale that is going through in September, we can prepare for that, we can anticipate. So that strategic direction comes from the amount of potential sales that we could have. There is no point in hiring or training technical staff or administrative staff if there is no projection of a sale (P4, HR, Engineering, Canada).

There was similar sentiment from Pakistan as well regarding HR's involvement in business decisions resulting in increased efficiency in the areas of recruitment and employee training. One of the participants interviewed stated:

> If you take recruitment for example, it costs more than double to outsource recruitment on a single position as compared to in-house recruitment. A company can save a lot of resources by investing in its HR department (P1, HR, Engineering, Pakistan).

From the above example, it is evident that participants perceive the value in keeping HR departments in the loop regarding business strategy can result in increased firm performance because both understaffing and overstaffing may lead to loss of revenue and opportunities in the market. This is consistent with the findings of Hancock et al. (2013) who report that the correlation between turnover and financial performance of the firm is relatively low ($r = -.03$)

overall; however it is much higher in certain contexts (e.g. where safety and quality are important) (r = -.12).

1.2 The impact of possessing or not possessing technical knowledge and skills on job performance of HR professionals understanding & connecting with technical managers

While discussing impact of technical knowledge and skills on job performance of HR and their communication with technical managers, several common themes emerged from both Canada and Pakistan. Participants in both Pakistan and Canada highlighted the importance of understanding the technical aspects of business. There was a feeling in both cultures that possessing technical background is helpful to HR professionals performing their roles. This situation was found to be more true for certain functions of HRM such as recruitment and selection as compared to documentation or employee onboarding. Other than recruitment, some participants felt that technical knowledge could also come in handy when developing policies, especially in situations where HRM policies are tied with health and safety. However, all participants agreed that technical knowledge can be acquired through experience rather than a technical degree or other educational qualification. Most were of the opinion that after working in a particular field for a period of time, an HR professional can gain requisite level of knowledge to perform their job roles at a satisfactory level. There was also a suggestion that technical personnel, especially managers also realize that HR personnel do not come from a technical background, and are willing to cooperate for mutual benefit. According to one of the participants working for an engineering firm in Canada:

Because we are a technical company, it is actually vital. Engineers have an entire

standard of ethics that they have to maintain. They have professional development

issues that they have to maintain. There is so much attached to the professional

designation that actually dovetails with a lot of HR and social policies within our

company, or any company, they are not covered by employment standards so it's

another way of guiding their work. Because they are not covered by employment

standards, I actually have to know what they are covered by because I just can't

go to the book and find out. So I have to understand what they are doing. What

the limits are on that. What the inter-company policies are and what their

professional limits are. To make sure it makes sense, that people are well paid and

that they are safe (P5, HR, Engineering, Canada)

Somewhat similar sentiments in relation to technical skills were expressed by a
participant in engineering sector in Pakistan. According to this participant, technical knowledge
and skill do play some part in job performance of HR professionals, albeit this is not a major
factor.

I think technical knowhow plays a part but I would say it's only 10% in most

jobs. It may be more useful in some jobs than others. For example in recruitment,

a technical recruiter may not have a degree in a technical field, but they have their

own knowledge gained through experience which helps them in sourcing and

short listing the right candidates. They can then get these candidates interviewed

by a technical manager. This skill set of a technical recruiter also helps in

clarifying communication about the requirement of technical manager (P2, HR,

Engineering, Pakistan)

This notion of technical knowledge being more important in some functions of HR as compared to the others was also found in Canada as well with one participant working in IT industry saying:

I think the only aspect of HR where you need to know some technical knowledge, and not necessarily need to, but just the language, the technical language, is in recruitment where you need to know what the requirement is for a certain IT job and how to fill it. But in my job, in doing the documents and paperwork and onboarding it's not required. I think it's more beneficial, but not necessarily required in recruitment (P3, HR, IT, Canada).

Further highlighting the benefits of technical knowledge for job performance, another participant working in the field of information technology in Canada was of the opinion that although technical knowledge is helpful, it can be acquired through experience rather than academic qualification.

Technical background would definitely help my job. I feel that to be a good HR business partner, its better that HR person has relevant professional background or knowledge towards industry or products. It is crucial for HR person to be able to ask relevant questions. At the moment HR persons just focus on competencies like interpersonal skills, communication skills, and the technical manager is responsible for technical stuff. It would be beneficial if I know the basic IT Technical information. It would be beneficial for screening. I believe that relevant industrial experience will outweigh the academic background. I don't think that we should require all the HR people to study a degree or diploma in IT for

example to work in IT industry but industrial experience is important. For

example as HR people in IT we should know what the company does and what

kind of people we hire and what the market is. How we can best retain people and

develop them. If we have the basic information that what people think and what

they want, we will help the business to develop further (P2, HR, IT, Canada).

Another participant from the IT industry in Canada while discussing the same theme was

of the opinion:

If I am working against another recruiter that comes from technical background, I

think it may be easier for them to speak the technical language, but I don't think

that those having a technical background would put me at a disadvantage. I think

if I stay in this IT recruitment role for a few years, it would help me when I move

to another IT recruitment role so its experience that matters (P1, HR, IT, Canada).

This notion was also found in Pakistan as well with one participant working in IT sector

stating that HR personnel coming from a purely technical educational background can hinder job

performance.

I think HR is a very broad field. Being an HR professional requires you to have a

broader vision. If a technical person starts performing HR functions, their vision

maybe limited to just their own industry. If you work in an industry for a few

years, you gather industry specific knowledge which is more useful for HR than a

technical degree (P3, HR, IT, Pakistan)

Participants in both cultures side talked about rework, which is a term used to describe

the tasks they had to perform again due to lack of understanding of technical aspects. This was

especially true in the case of recruitment. Participants in both cultures quoted specific examples when they submitted shortlisted candidates for an open position to technical managers and were told that candidates were not relevant for the job role. Participants agreed this was due to their lack of technical background and lack of understanding of technical terms. According to one participant from IT industry in Canada:

> I do encounter these type of challenges from time to time because IT is developing so fast so it is becoming difficult for HR professional to develop themselves as IT generalists. For example one of the hiring I was involved in, one of the requirement was that the candidates should have a certain certification. It was hard to find candidates with that certification… I believe that it was relevant to my understanding of IT knowledge rather than just miscommunication. Because looking at resumes, it seems everyone has IT knowledge or everyone can do the job. But the hiring manager explained the details of that certification to me and that people who have that certification definitely demonstrated they have the right skills to do the job (P2, HR, IT, Canada).

Another participant working engineering sector in Pakistan expressed similar sentiments when asked about rework:

> Yes we do come across [this] situation, especially in recruitment where a technical manager asks for a candidate with specific characteristics and when we submit shortlisted resumes, they come back to us saying that is not what we asked for. I think most of it can be put down to HR not being from [the] technical

background. But having said that…With the passage of time you get experience

which helps you perform your job better (P1, HR, Engineering, Pakistan)

1.3 Strategies used by HR professionals to compensate for their lack of technical knowledge or work experience in a technical field

Participants in both Canada and Pakistan agreed that they sometimes face challenging

situations in performing their job responsibilities because of the absence of technical

background. Participants agreed that they use certain strategies to compensate for a lack of

technical background and to be more effective in their job roles. While accepting that not

possessing technical background can prove challenging sometimes, HR personnel on both sides

try to compensate in other ways. Main strategies include asking questions and reading through

helpful literature in the forms of books or online articles. Participants in both cultures also

admitted to asking technical managers and other technical personnel about topics they did not

understand. Attending seminars and trainings as well as going through available literature are

some of the other ways that HR personnel use to compensate for lack of technical background.

Similarly, experience of working in a particular industry also helps HR personnel in

enhancing their learning of technical side. When discussing such situations, one participant in

engineering sector in Canada stated:

When an engineer says he is going to do a form of inspection, he knows what he

is talking about but I don't know if it means he is going to have somebody climb

into a 40 foot pit and then down a pipe. So there is safety issues that come up,

there are equipment issues . . . So if they are not scheduling people properly, I

have got to make sure that people are OK. So it does make the amount that I have

had to learn to understand what they are saying and the ramifications of that have made a huge difference (P5, HR, Engineering, Canada).

To mitigate this lack of technical background, the same participant stated to taking following steps:

I have read books on standards, I have gone to sites, and I have sat in on technical seminars. We have a number of labs and as I was developing the HR department I was also developing safety department so I have to go in and inspect the labs to learn about the equipment. Its experiential and its book learning (P5, HR, Engineering, Canada).

Another participant from engineering sector in Canada stated the following while discussing challenges of working in a technical field without possessing a technical background:

I would say it's a challenge every single day. I didn't go to BCIT for 2 years to get an Engineering certificate. So that's a challenge. I think though it's actually a good challenge because it forces you to not only learn about that one specific technical aspect but also the similarities between all related technical facets. For example if I am looking for an electronics engineer and an electrical engineer, I know the difference between the two. I know what one can provide and what other can provide. So it's going to be difficult to have every single type of technical knowledge in any company (P6, HR, Engineering, Canada).

Similarly while discussing their strategy for coping with lack of technical background the same participant continued:

I ask a lot of questions. If I don't understand something works that is related to my

job I will go through my list of technical experts and I will ask them, what is this,

what can you do with this, how can you help me with this, what am I looking for

with regards to whatever it is that I do not understand (P6, HR, Engineering,

Canada).

One participant working in IT industry in Canada talked about potential challenge they
could face while competing against someone with a technical background in the area of
recruitment and selection and the strategies they have used to overcome lack of technical
background:

On my own I pretty much had to figure out what IT solutions meant. When I

started I had no idea what IT solutions consist of. It took a lot of asking questions,

asking other people in the organization who may not be working directly with me

to get a better picture of what this company does, what services they provide to

their clients. That included talking to other employees and Googling our own

company to know what our history is and what we are trying to do . . . so that's

something that I had to take initiative to do on my own (P1, HR, IT, Canada).

Similar thoughts were expressed by a HR professional in Pakistan working in IT
industry:

I have been IT recruiter for many years and I recruit all type of technical roles

such as entry level software developer to Sr. level solution architect. And I do feel

like, for loss of better term ' I have no idea what they do' for example till now I

still don't understand what share point means. So if I hire a share point analyst, I

can only target the key words based on the job description but I wouldn't' exactly know what their daily responsibilities are and what benefit they will bring to the business (P3, HR, IT, Pakistan).

As for strategy used by them to overcome lack of technical background the participant stated:

I think interest is the best teacher. For myself I wouldn't go into getting a technical diploma or technical degree, but I definitely think that I should keep studying, keep learning, and keep up with the trends of IT so at least I should know what kind of people we need to hire. I also talk to the hiring manager, ask those questions and try to understand the technical role. I also try to read IT related information and articles on social media and different websites. I also talk to technical people at work. They can tell me their frustrations that what they want and what they don't want to develop further. So they are my first hand information channel (P3, HR, IT, Pakistan).

Another participant from engineering sector in Pakistan while discussing this topic also discussed the value of experience that comes with having worked in an industry for a number of years:

I feel you learn with the passage of time. If you start fretting right at the start of your job with a new company, then you will be doing a disservice to yourself. When you spend time in a company or in a particular industry, you learn the level of technical knowhow required for your job and this comes only with experience. I also learned this through experience and now I feel quite comfortable after

spending a couple of years in this industry. As for the things I do not understand, I

try to ask questions, I look to sit with technical people, maybe during lunch hour

to see what they are discussing and see if I can learn anything (P1, HR,

Engineering, Pakistan).

Interestingly, in this case, a few HR professionals across both cultures did not feel they

had to do anything extra to compensate for lack of technical background. According to these

professionals, HRM skills are transferrable across companies and industries and coupled with

their education and experience in dealing with people, there is no need to do anything extra. A

couple of participants from both cultures who felt HR professionals do not need to go out of their

way to work in a technical field. One participant from the IT industry in Canada while discussing

this point stated:

You train on the job. The skills are transferrable between industries. HR is not

industry specific. HR is HR and can be transferred to any industry that you go

into. And I don't think there is any benefit of having technical background or

having a technical degree. You mentioned healthcare, personally I have not seen

in job posting (for HR) that require you to have a background in healthcare. It

might say previous experience in healthcare industry, but it does not ever say that

you need a degree in nursing or whatever (P3, HR, IT, Canada).

Continuing with the same theme, the participant further stated:

HR is something that once you understand how to do the general focus of HR, so

there are different aspects of HR that you can breakdown into mini departments,

like payroll, benefits, onboarding, recruitment, which can be picked up and

moved into any industry. I don't think its industry specific (P3, HR, IT, Canada).

Similarly, a participant working in engineering sector in Pakistan also talked about the importance of people skills over technical knowledge and skills:

I think in general a lot of the skills and knowledge that you pick up in school are

applicable while working in the real world, but I think more so it is common sense

and the ability to work with people or manage people, skills that you don't ever

learn in school. I think when we say technical knowledge or skills, these are

things you can train people on or teach them from books but you can't train

peoples attitude or personalities, that is something that comes from within and I

think that takes precedence over technical knowledge for HR people (P2, HR,

Engineering, Pakistan).

1.4 Impact of possessing or not possessing technical knowledge and skills on career development of HR professionals

While discussing career development of HR professionals and the role played by

technical knowledge in that career development, the majority of participants across both cultures

in this study agreed that having a technical background, especially in terms of education can be

beneficial. However, they deemed this to be an added advantage, not a necessity. Participants

were of the opinion that HR professional working in technical fields can forge a successful

career even without having a technical background. When asked to compare their career

prospects against someone from a technical background, participants argued that although that

person may have an advantage in understanding technical side of things, they may not be as good

in soft skills and human aspects of the job. Participants across both cultures agreed that people skills play a more important role in career progression of HR professionals as compared to technical skills.

When discussing the impact of technical background on career development of HR professionals, participants from both Canada and Pakistan agreed that although technical background can be beneficial, it is not necessary to have a successful career in HR. One participant form engineering sector in Canada stated:

I would say that to be a successful HR person and have a good career, there are a lot of soft skill and competencies other than technical knowledge. Technical knowledge or background is something nice to have but not a something that is a must have (P4, HR, Engineering, Canada).

Similarly another participant from Canada working in engineering sector stated the usefulness of having technical knowledge and skills, but at the same time stressed that these can be acquired in other ways as well:

Yes in a way it does have an effect but that's just because of the opportunities that have come up through it. . . Having learnt and gone to sites and done research on what it is that we do, means that I can sit at the table and train people and it also means that I can sit at the table when we are looking at proposals and making sure that they understand when they are writing proposals they understand they have to put this many people on a shift and maintain sensible hours and they have to do certain things. So I don't think I need to be an engineer but I do need to have knowledge of what we do and what each thing is (P5, HR, Engineering, Canada).

Similarly in Pakistan, a participant from the engineering sector while discussing career prospects of HR professional in technical field said:

I think that in any field that is technical that has HR professionals; you are always going to be learning what that trade is and how you can understand it in the shortest available time. That is always a challenge. There are tools and techniques and aids to help the HR professional to understand but at the end of the day I think if there is actual technical knowledge, it is so much more beneficial. Having said that, I don't think it will have a great impact on career progression. Because when you have spent a couple of years in the industry, you pretty much know everything you need from a technical point of view (P1, HR, Engineering, Pakistan).

While comparing the career prospects of an HR professional with technical background as compared to one without technical background, a participant from engineering sector in Canada said:

For the person who has a technical knowledge they are going to be at an advantage when dealing with the technical side of things . . . With the HR side what's going to be different is that they might not always know what makes people tick but on the other hand, a technical person with a business background might be lacking in some of the sensitive information that an HR professional might have when it comes to dealing with other things that are not technical related. . . I feel experience is more important than just having a degree at this point to progress in your career (P6, HR, Engineering, Canada).

Another HR professional from IT industry in Canada while discussing the same issue stated:

I think the career path of HR professional whether they come from a technical

background or not is affected by that. I don't think the technical background

would have a huge impact on what career path of the HR professional would be

. . . if I come in and I know nothing about the industry, nothing about IT there

might be barriers in terms of personal relationships. In terms of career path

though, I think that's one thing about HR that is so interesting is that you can go

from industry to industry, at the end it is the people component of the role that

makes or breaks your career. If you are going to be successful as an HR

professional, I think the technical side is not as important as the people side and

skills to progress in a career in HR (P2, HR, IT, Canada).

Expressing similar sentiments, one participant from engineering sector in Pakistan stressed that technical background could be helpful, but people skills and competencies are far more important as far as career growth is concerned:

We have examples of technical people moving to recruitment because they have

been helping HR people in recruitment and they grow into successful HR people.

I really think career development and growth depends on a lot of other factors and

is not guaranteed with possessing a technical background. Technical background

is helpful but not essential. I think for HR people the key competencies are

integrity and teamwork as well as ambition and openness. If they are good at

documentation and developing policies, technical background is not a major thing

in career development (P1, HR, Engineering, Pakistan).

Perspective 2: Technical Managers in Canada and Pakistan

2.1 The impact of possessing or not possessing technical knowledge and skills on understanding & connecting with technical managers

A couple of interesting points came up from both Canadian and Pakistani perspectives relative to the impact of technical knowledge and skills on HRM's relationship with technical managers. As was the case with HR professionals, a lot of similarities emerged from technical managers points of view as well. Technical managers from both cultures confirmed that their interactions with HR personnel were mostly related to hiring and firing or sometimes for performance evaluations, although the performance evaluations mostly sees HRM playing more of a clerical or record keeping role rather than actively sitting in the evaluation meetings. When describing their interaction with HRM, a participant from engineering sector in Canada stated:

It is very interesting because there is very little interaction with HR. Mostly it is

for hiring or formalizing employee evaluations (P1, Tech, Engineering, Canada)

Another participant from engineering sector in Canada also described their interactions with HR professionals by saying:

It is mostly related to hiring, or sometimes unfortunately laying people off.

Checking the salaries and any other personnel question[s] that comes from my

team for which I have to check with HR (P2, Tech, Engineering, Canada)

One participant from engineering sector in Pakistan also mentioned recruitment as the area that requires them to interact with the HR department on a regular basis:

Most of my time with HR is spent when I have hiring requirement for my team. Other than that if there is any problem that requires HR to intervene, there is not much interaction (P1, Tech, Engineering, Pakistan)

While describing their interactions, one of the key points to emerge from this discussion was regarding salary structure in the companies. Managers from both cultures expressed their frustration with the inflexible salary structure offered by HR departments that sometimes results in the managers not being able to hire the type of resource they want. However, almost all of the managers agreed that pay scale is decided with the directions of top management and HR alone is not responsible for that. On the problems or miscommunication with HR personnel, a participant from engineering sector in Canada added:

One of my pet peeves with HR is that they would like to set a pay scale that is a standard anywhere in the company. So it does not matter which office or geographical location you are in, for all offices, same pay scale would apply. That does not seem the reality when you are working all across Canada. Pay scale that can attract highly skilled personnel in Toronto may not be adequate to attract same type of personnel say in Calgary or Vancouver. I think there needs to be some consideration for the differences geographically (P1, Tech, Engineering, Canada)

When quizzed about the reason behind this, the participant added:

I think this is because of direction from the top management more than anything else. Because if people from different offices talk to each other and they have approximately the same pay scale, if they don't, it can create a lot of ill will and

can act as a demonization for employees that are making less for doing the same job (P1, Tech, Engineering, Canada)

Another participant from engineering sector in Canada also pointed out problems with setting a pay scale by adding:

We usually encounter problems sometimes when we are looking for hiring a person with specific qualification and HR is not able to provide that or during salary negotiations they come back with different things and levels of salaries and we have different ideas about the level of the person that we are hiring. But these differences are normally resolved by discussion (P3, Tech, Engineering, Canada)

Similar sentiments regarding difficulties and miscommunication in deciding pay scales were expressed by a participant in engineering sector in Pakistan as well by saying:

After finishing up interviews, finalizing salary negotiations with HR can be a tedious process. Too often we find that candidates do not fit within salary ranges given by HR. I feel there are certain constraints placed on HR as far as salary structure is concerned and these constraints come from top management. But if you are working in a tight market where finding appropriate people are difficult, I think we need to be more flexible (P1, Tech, Engineering, Pakistan)

Another interesting point in this discussion was the requirement of technical qualification for HRM in the opinion of these technical managers. In both Canada and Pakistan, technical managers wished for more HR professionals with technical qualifications. They were of the opinion that it would improve the level of support they are currently getting from HR departments. Also they felt that increased specialization in HRM would be beneficial for

business as well. When asked their opinion on things that could improve the level of understanding they currently have with the HR department, one participant in engineering sector in Canada was of the opinion:

> I wish I could see more technical people and with strong judgments with HR but I don't . . . It is very important to have a professional person in HR who have some technical background and have passed some courses and are familiar with the business they are working. If you are HR in mining it is totally different from HR in a food store or in McDonalds. It is very important to have HR who know about business (P2, Tech, Engineering, Canada)

Another participant from engineering sector in Canada expressed similar feelings by stating:

> We as technical people sometimes don't know the role of HR and I think we should know more. But I also expect HR to get some technical knowledge. Get a good (technical) degree from a good university, at least for top management in HR. It very important to have a good technical background to judge people and help business correctly and it is also important from a health and safety point of view (P4, Tech, Engineering, Canada)

Participants from Pakistan also had similar thoughts on their understanding and connection with the HR department with one participant in engineering sector stating:

> Obviously we would prefer to work with HR who are technically sound. It would make our jobs easier and I think this is the purpose of HR as a support function to make our jobs easier. . . I feel it should be a specialized job, HR in engineering or

any other technical field. However, I do understand that I am talking about the ideal situation which may not be practically possible (P2, Tech, Engineering, Pakistan)

However there were participants in Canada who suggested other areas of knowledge where HR needs improvement rather than technical knowledge. Labor laws and financial skills were suggested as the areas where HR personnel needs to improve in order to provide better support and understand the business better. For example, a participant from engineering sector in Canada wanted HR to focus on other areas of knowledge rather than technical skills in order to improve their understanding and connection with technical managers:

Rather than technical background, I would certainly say that in my experience in this company and other companies before this, people say the ideal HR should have a really strong background in law and labor relations . . . Because for any technical background that they are short on, there are lots on people in the company that they can contact, lots of resources they can draw on. The resource that is lacking is how to manage underperforming employees especially when you have to lay off people due to lack of work or poor performance. It seems the management needs some good guidance on how to implement those types of things (P5, Tech, Engineering, Canada).

2.2 The impact of possessing or not possessing technical knowledge and skills on job performance of HR professionals

As discussed in the previous part, most of the technical managers interviewed in the study interact with HR professionals for hiring and firing purposes. In most cases, the process starts with the HR department shortlisting candidates from the applicant pool and presenting those to the technical manager. The technical managers are responsible for assessing the requisite skill set for the job. Participants interviewed for this case stated difficulty in finding the right persons for the job but mostly put that down to a competitive market rather than HR being unable to find the right person for the job. However, they did mention having to explain differences in technical qualification and skill to HR personnel to help them with the recruitment process. While discussing the job performance of HR personnel in the recruitment process, a participant from the engineering sector in Canada said:

> The first initial screening for hiring is to gauge if they have the technical skills and background. . . What I see now is that they (HR) tend to go back and forth saying if you need someone with environmental background, is it environmental sciences or environmental engineering? So there is a lot of back and forth where we are telling them what to look for. They'll send you five candidates and say here are five candidates, these two were close but didn't make it and these five did make it. And you might say oh actually three of these people are really good, the other four should not be considered. It seems to be a very iterative process (P1, Tech, Engineering, Canada)

When asked if this going back and forth is because of the level of technical understanding of HRM or for any other reason, the same participant added:

There are a lot of specialized positions across the company, so I don't know if you could train someone to understand all the idiosyncrasies of what these positions entail (P1, Tech, Engineering, Canada)

Another participant in engineering sector in Canada also confirmed this notion by stating:

Mostly the nature of the business that we have is that there is a lot of variety in similar areas. For example if we are looking for a person with process engineering background specialized in grinding area, we need to tell HR that yes the person you shortlisted is a process engineer, but we are looking for a person in grinding area. Most of the times, we are checking with each other and helping each other. It needs HR to be in touch with me and me to be in touch with them because of the variety in the market (P6, Tech, Engineering, Canada)

A participant working in engineering sector in Pakistan also expressed similar sentiments while discussing HR personnel's performance in recruitment function:

In most cases, we have to tell HR the technical skills to look for when short listing candidates for any open position. HR has developed a form that we need to fill giving details of the type of person we are looking for in terms of education and skill set. Even after this, sometimes there is confusion. For example, if a person has telecommunication engineering degree, it is similar to electrical engineering. They may seem to have similar skill set but it is not. So we have to sometimes meet with HR to discuss these things (P3, Tech, Engineering, Pakistan)

Describing the recruitment process in their organizations, participants pointed out that the HR department is normally involved in the process from start to finish. HR was found to be a part of job advertisement, interview and salary negotiation process. When asked further about the role of HR in the process, a participant from engineering sector in Canada said:

HR's job in hiring is when I write the qualifications, they help us put that into right format and put it nicely into the file. Also in the interview meeting, I need HR to be sitting there to take the notes and talk about salary and policy of the company including insurance and benefits so HR is involved almost till the end (P2, Tech, Engineering, Canada)

Relating to HR's performance the same participant talked about paucity of options available in the market saying:

It is really interesting because in the market, people having experience beyond 2 years are in short supply. Usually when we are hiring, our competitors are also hiring, so it is even harder to find suitable candidates. So I would say if we ask for someone with a particular level or skill set, there is always a compromise we have to make (P2, Tech, Engineering, Canada)

There was a similar trend observed in Pakistan where a working in engineering sector participant said:

We work in an industry where we need people with very specific skill set. Sometimes the exact type of person that we are looking for is not available in the market so we have to be flexible. In this situation even HR is helpless because if there are no perfect candidates out there, how can they find one for us (P2, Tech, Engineering, Pakistan)

One interesting point coming out of this discussion is that the technical managers were of the opinion that it would be difficult for any one person to master the technical side while performing the HR role, especially in recruitment. According to them, this is due to the variety of skill set and subtle differences that are present. In spite of that, there was a unanimous opinion expressed by technical managers that HR personnel should have technical knowledge and increased specialization of technical skills in order to support them in a better way. While commenting on the level of support they are getting a participant from engineering sector in Canada was of the opinion:

> Generally the level of support that we are getting is good. But sometimes when we have to lay off people, HR believes in just handing a letter to people and say get out of office. But when a person has worked in my team for five years, I believe in being more professional and sitting with that person and HR to explain everything. We have to deal with people better. We cannot say hey, today you are coming to the office – tomorrow, no (P4, Tech, Engineering, Canada)

A participant working in engineering industry in Canada, while discussing comparing the impact of work experience and technical knowledge on the HR department's performance was of the opinion:

> If HR guy passes some courses in let's say mining or they have been in operation in mining, it could have a big impact on their performance and make a lot of difference. Most of the problems we are facing now with HR can be solved with that. It's good to have experience in an industry, but I still think technical background is important for HR. If I am HR in oil and gas or mining or any other field, I should have some training. I

know you get management training and how to deal with people, but still you need some

technical and industry specific skills (P5, Tech, Engineering, Canada)

Similarly another participant in engineering sector in Canada when discussing the same

point said:

It (technical knowledge) can have a big impact in the performance because they will

know how to get the timing right. They will know how to select the right person for the

job. But more than 90% of HR does not know about business (P3, Tech, Engineering,

Canada)

Similarly, a participant from engineering sector in Pakistan also stressed the link between

technical knowledge and performance of the HR department in the following words:

It's a good point because HR is the face of the company during hiring process.

They shortlist CVs and conduct initial interviews. If they know about what the

company does and have related qualifications themselves, they will represent

company in a much better way. (P3, Tech, Engineering, Pakistan)

Discussion

This research considers the perspectives of both HR professionals and the technical managers regarding the role of HRM in technical industries such as engineering or information technology. From the first perspective, which is of those working in HRM, this study evaluated the perceived importance of technical knowledge and skills for HR professionals from four different angles, and compared the HRM practices of technical firms in Pakistan and Canada. HR professionals in both countries provided insight on: the impact of technical knowledge and skills on the role of HRM as strategic and business partner, the impact of possessing or not possessing technical knowledge and skills on job performance of HR professionals understanding and connecting with technical managers, strategies used by HR professionals to compensate for their lack of technical knowledge or work experience in a technical field, and the impact of possessing or not possessing technical knowledge and skills on career development of HR professionals.

In the second perspective, which is the technical manager's perspective, the perceived importance of technical knowledge and skills for HR professionals was investigated from technical managers' point of view. This importance has been gauged by two different angles that are the impact of possessing or not possessing technical knowledge and skills on understanding & connecting with technical managers and the impact of possessing or not possessing technical knowledge and skills on job performance of HR professionals. These angles have been examined cross culturally in Canada and Pakistan.

For the most part, the themes in both Canadian and Pakistani HR industries were similar in each case. It is appropriate to mention that none of the participants interviewed in this case who were working in HRM had a technical background in terms of education or work experience

in a technical position. Quite a few common themes between the HRM industry of Canada and Pakistan emerged during the course of this study. This finding in this study is particularly important provided the differences between the two societies earlier highlighted by Geert Hofstede's tool of cultural comparison. One of the reasons for these similarities may be due to the fact that HR as a profession shares a common body of knowledge and best practices through global forums, and although labor laws and standards may differ across cultures, a common set of knowledge binds them together. This set of knowledge comes from international HR bodies such as Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) through their global certifications and knowledge database (SHRM, n.d.). Further Huselid et al. (1997) suggest that there is a ceiling effect with respect to the development of technical HR practices and their effect on firm performance.

As with the HR professionals' perspective, there were many similarities between the two countries in technical managers' perspective as well. Again, this is particularly interesting considering the differences between the cultures highlighted by Geert Hofstede's tool of cultural comparison. For example, Pakistani society, according to this tool is believed to be high on uncertainty avoidance. These societies are usually rigid in beliefs and intolerant of unconventional ideas (Hofstede, n.d.a). Canadian society on the other hand has a higher level of uncertainty avoidance as compared to Pakistan and can be classified as more tolerant of unconventional ideas (Hofstede, n.d.b). Based on this fact, one might assume HR function in Canada to be more developed with new and innovative ideas playing their role; however, such differences are not evident.

An interesting finding related to the degree to which HR professionals play a strategic role within the organization. The literature suggests that there is an increased trend for HRM to

play a more active role in devising business strategy (Crouse, Doyle & Young, 2011); however, in this study it was found that HR's presence in top level strategic meetings is more as a support function rather than an active participant. This finding is in line with de Guzman, et al., (2011) who also found HR personnel acting as a support function in devising business strategy. There was a strong indication from a number of participants in this study that this could be due to company size and structure as participants reported a more active strategic role for HRM in large multinational corporations and publically listed companies. This study has also found support for HR's role in the strategic decision-making process in the generally held belief that the firm's financial performance would benefit from HR's involvement in workforce planning and other important functions. This is in line with the research of Gannon, Doherty & Roper (2012) where they found strategic human resource management to be a source of competitive advantage for the company.

During data collection for this study, there were a few individuals who worked as general or office managers. These were primarily technical people performing HRM functions, specifically recruitment in small firms with less than 20 employees. These firms had no full time HR professional, and instead these general managers are performing HRM responsibilities. This is a unique case due to the size of the company so data from these participants was not included for analysis, but it is worth a mention here because of the above mentioned finding in this study where the type of role performed by HR was found to be related to organizational size and structure. This situation is consistent with the theory of differentiation in organizations (Blau, 1970), which illustrates the importance of coordination between functions in larger organizations.

Another finding of this study is the indication that technical knowledge may be more useful in certain functions of HRM. There was strong indication by both HR and technical professionals that technical knowledge would be useful when performing a recruitment and selection function. This is particularly interesting because Boselie & Paauwe, (2005) discussed the changing dynamic of HR's role from merely a staffing function to that business manager. However, findings in this study contrast their recommendations as HRM was found to be performing a substantial role in recruitment and selection function as compared to other functions such as training and development or performance evaluation.

Both HR and technical professionals mentioned rework or the extra time and effort spent in identifying the right candidates for the job due to HR professionals' lack of technical background. Although HR professionals were of the opinion that this could be overcome with experience, technical managers expressed their desire to see more technical understanding and knowledge from HRM and also more specialization according to the industry they are working in. This finding could be useful for designing certifications or qualifications that HR professional could obtain if they want to work in a specific industry. These certifications could provide HR professionals with a level of technical knowledge required for performing their roles smoothly right from the start. In addition to this, there was also a desire from technical managers for increased support from HR departments with labor relations and labor laws. This could also be useful for developing training programs for HR professionals.

Another area this study strived to highlight was the effect of technical knowledge and skills on career growth of HR professionals. Interestingly, HR professional from both

cultures who were part of this study did not generally feel that technical knowledge would have an impact on their career growth. Although they admitted it would facilitate them in their job roles, but did not deem it necessary to have a successful career. This could be further investigated by including top management or people responsible for hiring HR professionals in the company to seek their perspective in this matter. This would also be interesting because most of the technical managers in this study, although not dissatisfied with the level of support they are currently getting from HR personnel, wished for a higher level of technical knowledge and understanding from HRM. This point is more interesting because all the technical participants in this study admitted having never come across an HR professional with technical background. Technical managers in this study also stressed the importance of constant communication with HR to understand each other's working in a better way. This is in line with research done by Van Eynde & Burr, (2011) that showed the need to teach non-HR managers some of the knowledge and skills from HR because it would provide them with better understanding of the HR function.

This study also highlighted some of the techniques used by HR professionals in both cultures in order to overcome a lack of technical knowledge. Some of the techniques commonly used are asking questions and reading through helpful technical literature. Constant communication with each other was highlighted as extremely important by both HR and technical professionals to overcome any gaps in understanding. Some HR professionals also admitted to attending technical seminars and trainings. As discussed earlier, this could be useful in developing specialized programs for HR professionals rather than them attending programs meant for technical people. This is in line with

research conducted by Labedz & Lee (2011), that showed that HR professional make a conscious effort to adapt to their environment in a favorable way. They seek ways and means of making their surroundings more suitable by acquiring the skills needed for survival and to make favorable deals for themselves.

Research Contribution

This study adds to the body of knowledge in the field of Human Resources by highlighting the perceived importance of technical knowledge and skills for human resource professionals. The participants in this study, working in the field of HRM, will benefit from the enhanced understanding of their roles and the type of knowledge and skills required for them. This study will prove to be beneficial for the management of organizations by making them more aware of the HR function and its body of knowledge. Technical knowledge and skills requirement for HR professionals is an area that is yet to be fully explored. This study will highlight this particular area and motivate future researchers to explore this area further. It will also help in a better understanding of the strategic role that HR professionals are increasingly expected to play. This study will help in highlighting the importance of technical knowledge and skills for HR professionals in playing that strategic role and acting as a strategic business partner. In the case of HR professionals not possessing technical background in terms of education or job experience, this study will help to unearth strategies that they use to compensate for this perceived deficiency.

Business schools can also potentially benefit from the findings of this study as it will help clarify the knowledge and skills requirements that are demanded of HR professionals in the

market. The findings of this research suggest that the contribution of human resources may need to do a better job positioning themselves as a strategic business partner, and the need for HR practitioners to be well-rounded in other areas of business is important. This insight could help business schools design curriculum and prepare students before they go into the market.

Limitations & Future Directions for Research:

Although efforts were made to ensure the dependability and consistency of the research, there are some limitations that warrant some discussion. First, exploratory qualitative research is not intended to be generalized to other contexts, and care should be taken to guard against applying that the results of this study to other industries or countries.

Similarly, the sample poses another potential limitation. It was necessary to consider the parameters of the bounded systems of the case, and the participants in this study were from small and medium sized private companies. The size and structure of the companies involved were contextual factors that limit generalizability to smaller or larger firms in the same industry. Future research should consider the impact of company size and structure on the perceived importance of technical knowledge and skills.

Another potential limitation is the absence of top management's perspective from this study. Perspective of the people who are responsible for hiring HR professionals regarding perceived importance of technical knowledge and skills could provide additional insight.

Moreover, another of the potential limitations of this study is the disparity in number of participants from both cultures. Participants from Canada were more than double in number that from Pakistan. A number of factors limited the recruitment of participants in Pakistan, including the fact that the research was conducted from Canada, and the data collection period coincided with Ramadan, when many people have reduced working hours and absences from work. This may have had an impact on results as it resulted in reduced availability of potential participants and difficulty in arranging interview sessions.

A potential area for future research could be to focus on the perceived importance of technical knowledge and skills while performing different functions of HR, such as recruitment, performance evaluation, or training. By focusing on specific aspect of HR, targeted interventions could be provided to HR professionals engaged in work that would benefit from technical knowledge. This would be particularly interesting as there are indications in this study that technical knowledge and background maybe more important in some areas of HR than the others.

Cross cultural comparison of HRM knowledge and practices could also be explored further to assess the reason for similarities found between Canadian and Pakistani HRM sectors in this study. As discussed earlier, the similarities are particularly interesting given the differences between the two societies highlighted by Geert Hofstede's tool of cultural comparison earlier in this study.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions for HR professionals

1. Can you please tell me something about your educational background?

2. How many years of full time and part time work experience do you have?

3. How many years have you worked specifically in HR?

4. Can you please describe the industry in which you are currently working?

5. What are some of the other industries you have worked in before and does your work experience involve technical work in any capacity?

6. Can you describe how HR fits within the organization's design?

7. How important is it for you as a HR professional to possess technical knowledge and skills relevant to your industry?

8. What knowledge and skills related to the core business of the organization are needed in your current job in HR?

9. What is the effect of possessing or not possessing technical knowledge and skills on engaging in HR functions like recruitment or other day-to-day HR functions?

10. Can you describe any situations in which having technical knowledge and skills has been a factor in your HR role?

    a. Was it a benefit?

    b. Have you ever faced a situation where you were challenged because you did not have this knowledge?

11. How does your level of technical knowledge and skills affect your interactions with internal stakeholders/consumers of the HR department? (technical resources working in the company)

12. How could the level of technical knowledge and skills affect the career development and growth of HR professionals? (Both in your industry and overall)?

    a. To what extent has this been relevant for you in your career?

13. How does the level of technical knowledge and skills affect the strategic role of HR? (both in your industry and overall)

14. How does the level of technical knowledge and skills effect the role of HR as business partner? (both in your industry and overall)

15. How important is it that HR personnel working in your organization understand the technical aspects of the work that takes place in the company?

16. How important is it for you to understand the core business functions (non-HR) that occur in this company?

    a. If important, what did you do to acquire this knowledge?

17. What options or strategies do you have to compensate for any lack of technical knowledge and skills when acting in your role in HR?

18. Do you have any other comments that would be helpful for me to understand the role of HR in this environment?

Appendix B: Interview Questions for technical managers

1. How many years of full time and part time work experience do you have?
2. How many years of managerial experience do you have?
3. How often do you interact with your HR department for work related matters on a weekly basis?
4. Can you describe your interactions with HR personnel?
5. What role do you play in HR related activities like hiring, performance evaluation, or training needs assessments of your employees?
6. What role do HR personnel play in the above mentioned activities?
7. Can you highlight any specific examples where interactions with HR have worked really well?
8. Can you relay any opportunities or potential areas for improvement?
    a. Are these roles consistent with your expectations?
9. To what extent do (how common is it for) HR professionals that you have worked with to also have a technical background?
10. How important is it for the HR personnel in your company understand the core business and technical requirements of the company? To what extent do they currently understand?
    a. To what extent is this necessary for HR's role in hiring, performance appraisals, or training needs assessment?

11. Do you think it is necessary for HR personnel in your industry to have some technical education or work background?
    a. Why or why not?
12. Do you have any other comments that would be helpful for me to understand the role of HR in this environment?

Appendix C: Interview Consent form

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CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY ON: Technical Knowledge & Skills for Human Resource Professionals

RESEARCHERS: Abeer Pirzada MSc (Mgt) Candidate
Dr. David Richards, Associate Professor (Supervisor)
Faculty of Business Administration, Lakehead University

This is to state that I agree to participate in a research being conducted by Abeer Pirzada who is a Graduate Student at Faculty of Business Administration, Lakehead University. I also understand that a copy of this consent form will be provided to me for my record.

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is as follows:

This research will be a qualitative study that will investigate the perceived importance of technical knowledge and skills for human resource professionals. It will investigate whether possessing technical knowledge and skills related to the industry in which they are working is beneficial for human resource professionals in performing their tasks, how does it affect their job performance and their interaction with employees and managers in the company. This research will specifically examine the cross-cultural differences between Pakistan and Canada related to the perceived importance of these technical knowledge and skills.

B. PROCEDURES

Data will be collected through interviews. These interviews will take place in a single with each participant which will last between 45-60 minutes. The interviews will be recorded with the consent of the participant. There is no monetary compensation in this study

C. ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All information will be kept strictly confidential. The researchers will not disclose information about who participated in the study nor will they release information that could identify you (without your express permission). The final report may contain quotations taken from the interviews, but these will be anonymized so that identification of the speaker is not possible. No one within your organization will know how you answered the questions. All information will be secured in either a locked cabinet or through password protection for a period of 5 years.

CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences. All data related to those withdrawing participation will be destroyed upon the email request to withdraw from the study (prior to results publication).
- I understand that my participation in this study is CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity, personal or professional information without my explicit permission)
- I understand that the results from this study can be published.
- I permit the audio/video recording of my interview (Please select one)

    Yes _____   No _____   Audio recording only _____

Participants Signature:

Your signature on/acknowledgement of this form means that:

- You have read the information about the research
- You have been able to ask questions about this study
- You are satisfied with the answers to all of your questions
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing
- You understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason, and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.

I have carefully studied the above and understand this agreement. I freely consent and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____

Student Researcher's Signature:

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that they have freely chosen to be a part of this study.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____

Questions about the content and nature of this study may be directed to:

Dr. David Richards, Faculty of Business Administration

807-343-8525 or david.richards@lakeheadu.ca

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE!

Appendix D: REB Approval Letter

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May 23, 2014

Principal Investigator: Dr. David Richards
Student Investigator: Abeer Pirzada
Faculty of Business Administration
Lakehead University
955 Oliver Road
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 5E1

ORIGINAL

Dear Dr. Richards and Mr. Pirzada:

Re: REB Project #: 001 14-15 / Romeo File No: 1463864
Granting Agency: N/A
Granting Agency Project #: N/A

On behalf of the Research Ethics Board, I am pleased to grant ethical approval to your research project titled, "Technical Knowledge & Skills for Human Resource Professionals".

Ethics approval is valid until May 23, 2015. Please submit a Request for Renewal form to the Office of Research Services by April 23, 2015 if your research involving human subjects will continue for longer than one year. A Final Report must be submitted promptly upon completion of the project. Research Ethics Board forms are available through the Romeo Research Portal at:

http://romeo.lakeheadu.ca/ROMEO.Researcher/Login.aspx

During the course of the study, any modifications to the protocol or forms must not be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. You must promptly notify the REB of any adverse events that may occur.

Best wishes for a successful research project.

Sincerely,

Dr. Richard Maundrell
Chair, Research Ethics Board

/scw