

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

Labour relations as a field of study, has its origin at the exact time when any one individual homo sapien started performing labour in co-operation with, or on instruction of another homo sapien in a specific environment. It can be accepted that labour relations would not exist where labour is not being performed, or in circumstances where a person performs labour without being related to another person in the context of performing the labour at hand. A labour relationship can therefore exist in any situation where any one person involved in a relationship with one or more other people is performing any form of labour, and such relationship is directly related to the labour being performed.

This elementary view of labour relations is founded on the actual literal meaning of the two words used to construct the term. The Oxford Dictionary defines “Labour” (among others) as:

1. Physical or mental work
2. Exertion
3. A task
4. Working people distinguished from management

The Oxford Dictionary also defines “Relation/s” (among others) as:

1. Dealings with others
2. The way in which things are related to others
3. A similarity, correspondence or contrast between people or things or events
4. Being related

It can be argued that labour relations can be compared to human relations within a group that is involved in some or other form of labour. This very simplistic argument is however not entirely true, since many other variables, such as the natural environment, societal conditions, human behaviour and technology will influence or determine the purpose and nature of the labour being performed by individuals or groups.

The field of labour relations should not be unconditionally compared to ordinary human relations, because it encompasses the study of all variables, processes and structures that specifically influence the outcomes of human labour, being performed in a specific relationship and environment. The following distinctions should be noted in this regard:

Industrial relations has its origins in the industrial revolution, and focuses on the interaction between groups of people working in specific industries. It is therefore more concerned with the methods that are applied to regulate conflict between all parties and stakeholders in a particular industry or enterprise (Finnemore, 1999:1; Bendix, 1997:3).

Employee relations refers to the conflict, co-operation and communication that takes place between employers and employees in a workplace, irrespective of the type of bargaining structure and environment in which it exists (Swanepoel et al, 2000:635).

Labour relations refers to the relationships between people who are involved in some form of labour and those with whom, and for whom they labour, as well as the environmental variables and dynamics that influence the labour relationship (Bendix, 1997:3; Swanepoel et al, 2000:635).

The above terms are often used as synonyms in literature. Various authors will display a personal preference for the use of either term, in accordance with their own views. In this thesis, however, the term "labour relations" will be used, since it refers to all aspects of relationships in any labour environment, as opposed to

industrial relations that concerns itself with labour relations in a specific industrial environment, and employee relations that is more concerned with the interaction of parties in the workplace.

2. THE EVOLUTION OF LABOUR RELATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The modern South African labour relations system has evolved over many centuries. It is founded on many principles which were introduced to the original inhabitants of the land by a variety of European and Asian settlers (Wiehahn, 1982:i-1; Bendix, 1997: 77-103; Finnemore, 1999:20-42). Polarisation and marginalisation in policy and law were distinctive features of the early developmental years of the South African labour relations system. Many governments endeavored to balance the South African labour relations system, but contributed little to redress the obvious imbalances in the system. The policy of apartheid further contributed to polarisation and marginalisation, to the extreme of total exclusion of parties that should have been major participants in the development of the South African labour relations system.

Instead of redressing imbalances in the labour relations system, Nationalist governments which came to power in 1948, opted to introduce protectionist and paternalistic labour relations legislation and structures. This had the effect of rendering black workers and their organisations powerless in as far as labour relations and the political arena were concerned (Marx, 1996:31). These actions fumed labour unrest and eventually resulted in many years of industrial strife and conflict. After reaching a point of no return, the Wiehahn Report was commissioned in 1978. The resulting report document is widely considered to be the Magna Carta of the modern South African labour relations system.

The Wiehahn Commission paved the way for eventual non-adversarial labour relations in South Africa and created the opportunity for the introduction of progressive labour relations principles in a disaster prone society. It concluded that the modern South African labour relations system should be founded on six basic rights, namely: (Wiehahn, 1982:443-453)

1. The right to work.
2. The right of freedom of association.
3. The right to collective bargaining.
4. The right to withhold labour.
5. The right to protection.
6. The right to develop.

These basic rights were consequently introduced by the promulgation of a largely revised Labour Relations Act in 1979, and changes to other existing labour legislation. The Commission specifically noted that a labour relations system impacts on the social, economic and political development in the immediate society, and that it is often used as a battlefield for the attainment of rights in these spheres. It further reiterated that changes in labour relations will result in tension in other areas of society, and that the South African society will have to change on more fronts than only labour relations. It was abundantly clear that a society that does not wish to adapt to change, might suffer the loss of all customs and institutions that it holds dear. These sentiments were heeded to an extent and South Africa slowly turned towards a reformed society.

Although the transition period which took place between 1979 and 1994 can not be unequivocally described as a harmonious and co-operative process, the foundations for greater democracy in the workplace were firmly laid (Kemp, 1992:6). Many of the existing laws were out of touch with a changing society and were consequently heavily opposed and criticised by trade unions and managers (Rautenbach, 1993:1). Most South African workers were still experiencing a poor quality of life in townships, leading to more vociferous opposition to social injustice and subsequent heightened labour-management conflict in the workplace (Odernik-Duke, 1990:4-5). The transition period in South Africa was a somewhat miraculous effort to avert a prolonged civil war and to settle democracy by means of a negotiated settlement.

The full democratisation of South African society and South African labour relations, dawned with the first ever democratic elections in 1994. Many significant changes in the Labour Relations system have taken place since then. Trade unionism in South Africa flourished (Coleman, 2000:16-19) in the new dispensation and set the standard in Africa, where many governments still persist in repressing trade union activities. (Jordan, 2000:41)

Many relics from the past, however, continue to influence the South African workplace (Rautenbach, 1994:11). It is not surprising that according to research findings the typical South African worker is 30% more likely to get “very irritated” in the workplace than their American counterparts (Burton, 2001:24). Organisations should introduce mechanisms to deal with conflict constructively, and the obvious champions of this course are the labour relations practitioners of South Africa.

Sustained economic growth remains one of the most important challenges to improve conditions in the South African society. The advent of a new global economic dispensation that is more technologically based, further necessitates the development of human capital that has the ability to absorb and apply knowledge within the new global and technological environment (Yadavalli, 2001:9). Globalisation and the need for economic growth put pressure on managers and trade unions alike (Milani, 2001:3). It requires that the South African workforce and labour relations practitioners in particular, adapt and rise to new challenges.

Ramaisha (2002:1) summarised the present challenges in the South African labour relations environment as follows:

“You as employment relations practitioners need to advise us ordinary mortals on how we can truly harmonize our programme for the rebirth of Africa in the context of a globalization revolution where not only are the instruments of work transforming, but work itself. In the context where the

unit production is moving away from the large industrial factory. In a context characterized by decentralized modes of production linked through networks made possible by new information technology. In the context where restless capital spasmodically roves flexibly in the pursuit of better returns - exploiting opportunities where they present themselves and departing where they cease to be of value. "

"How do we promote sound employment relations and promote the African Renaissance in a context where the model of a stable, long-term employment in the same firm is increasingly being phased out? We live in a world where the incidence of part-time work, temporary work, subcontracting and outsourcing is rapidly increasing. "

3. THE NEED FOR AN INTEGRATED MODEL OF LABOUR RELATIONS

Modern South African labour relations have become increasingly vulnerable to constantly changing influences from the macro economic environment. These include technological development, global competitiveness and regional change within the African continent, AIDS, violence and a multiple of other societal influences emanating from efforts to rectify the remnants of past discrimination (Frost, 2001:21). Along with these influences, local organisations are continuously challenged to adapt to a dynamic, often volatile, societal and political system in an effort to improve societal growth and stability through improved productivity levels. Industrial unrest and declining productivity largely contribute to poor confidence in the South African economy and may eventually lead to large-scale unemployment and poor social conditions. Against this background, it becomes clear that unproductive labour relations can not be afforded, since it impacts at the heart of all economic and social activity in society. Clearly, Labour Relations practitioners functioning at all levels of the Labour Relations system have a tremendously important function in the maintenance of labour peace and the stimulation of productive industry (Ramaisha, 2002:1).

The influence from a magnitude of variables and the rapid changes in society led to many diverse approaches being adopted in the development of decision-makers and practitioners in both management and the trade union movement. These approaches were not necessarily conducive to the development of a culture of understanding, co-operation and mutual respect. A need developed for a holistic integrated approach to studying, researching and practicing labour relations in the modern South African economy. This thesis aims to propose such an approach.

4. LABOUR RELATIONS PRACTICE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Within the ambit of the broad field of study of human resource management, two of the most common areas of practitioner specialisation are those of labour relations management and training management. Undergraduate and diploma qualifications in human resource management typically reflect the different mainstreams of specialisation in their respective curricula at a general level, with in depth specialisation usually addressed at the post graduate or post diploma level.

The Wiehahn Commission (1982:251-255) concluded that the revised Labour Relations system that was to be implemented in 1979, would require specialised skills and that the labour relations training offered by tertiary institutions were inadequate at the time. Since then, labour relations training did receive more attention in general management and Human Resource management courses, although the need for specialised training was never properly addressed.

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the field, labour relations practitioners come from a variety of academic backgrounds in the legal, economic and management science or humanities disciplines. Market needs have until now only been serviced by some specialist university honors programmes and business school management development courses (Swanepoel, 2000:2). Table 1-1 reflects those positions that are commonly occupied by labour relations practitioners:

TABLE 1-1: TYPICAL OCCUPATIONS IN LABOUR RELATIONS

EMPLOYER GROUP	OCCUPATION
Management and employer organisations/federations	Labour Relations/Human Resources clerk Labour Relations/Human Resources officer Labour Relations training officer Employee assistance official Employer organisation official Labour market analyst Affirmative action programme manager Labour Relations manager/director <i>(Although line managers , supervisors and ordinary employees are not viewed as labour relations specialists, they also require training in labour relations)</i>
Independent practitioners	Associate Labour Relations consultant Independent Labour Relations consultant Research consultant Labour lawyer Labour law advisor Academics
Statutory organisations	CCMA case management officer CCMA conciliator Department of Labour Inspector Bargaining council: Inspector/official Labour Economist Department of Labour official Labour research specialist <i>(Although line managers, supervisors, ordinary employees and shop stewards are not viewed as labour relations specialists, they also require training in labour relations)</i>
Trade Unions and Trade Union Federation	Trade Union administrative official Full-time shop steward Local Union organiser Regional or National Union secretary/official <i>(Although ordinary employees and shop stewards are not viewed as labour relations specialists, they also require training in labour relations)</i>

Traditional approaches to labour relations training in South Africa were dramatically challenged with the advent of the new South African labour relations system. This system placed greater emphasis on industrial democracy and non-adversarial approaches to labour relations. A drastic paradigm shift in all participants at all levels of interaction in labour relations has become unavoidable and critical for the effective implementation of skills and knowledge that are required in the various components of the labour relations system (Myburgh & Barnard, 1990: 1).

Labour relations practitioners at all levels, are often expected to be the champions of change in the workplace. They will consequently have to be more than adequately equipped with sufficient insight, skills and knowledge if they are to prevail in their ensuing battles with unfounded bias, discrimination, bad faith, labour unrest and destructive conflict. It is further imperative that the development of labour relations competencies is conducted within the national training and education policy and legal framework for skills development.

During 1994 a comprehensive national study on the supply and demand of human resource practitioners was commissioned by the South African Board for Personnel Practice and conducted by the HSRC. The following specific findings apply to labour relations practitioners:

- only a small percentage of trained labour relations practitioners seem to serve the market (1.7%),
- there appears to be an oversupply of generalists in human resources management,
- industry would seem to indicate that practitioners' pre-employment experience and practical exposure to labour relations are in dire need and
- there is a need for trained labour relations specialists in the middle and upper levels of the profession.

Considering the present need for leadership in an ever changing and challenging labour relations environment, the findings of the report seem to further vindicate the need for specialised training programmes in labour relations. Kulubanis (1999:20-22) elaborates on the need for skills development programmes that address the actual development need and forwards the opinion that many skills development programmes are not specifically developed for the purpose that it is being applied. Such programmes are therefore unable to deliver the outcomes that were actually intended.

5. DEVELOPING SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS

5.1 Introduction

The South African economy suffers from a chronic shortage of skilled labour. This has negative consequences on economic growth and hampers the ability of the labour market to adapt to the instability often associated with globalization. (ILO, 1999:2) The skills shortage can be ascribed to the apartheid education system, which was founded on the principle of education and training to a privileged societal segment with little or no regard for the development of the total population.

Considering the imbalance in education and training opportunities, it is not surprising that management representatives are often well trained and skilled to participate effectively in the South African labour relations system, as opposed to supervisors, ordinary workers and trade union representatives that often lack appropriate skills and training. This lack of training and skills often leads to inefficiency in the intricate and intense interpersonal processes associated with effective negotiation and implementation of collective agreements and solutions to conflict (Swanepoel, 2000:1).

5.2 Levels of practice

Skills and knowledge needs of labour relations practitioners will differ, since labour relations interaction occurs at different levels of organisation and society. The skills needs of labour relations practitioners and other persons involved in labour relations can generally be classified as a basic competency level, an advanced competency level and a specialist competency level. Wolmarans and Eksteen (1987:6) proposed the following generic classification of training needs:

- Macro-level needs:

These are needs for skills and knowledge that can be applied to influence the cause of national issues such as politics, social issues, economy, technology and even the international environment. These needs may also be described as societal level needs.

- Meso-level needs:

These are organisational level needs for skills and knowledge that can be used to influence the organisational environment. eg. mission, vision, changes, policy, equipment and regulations. These needs may also be described as organisational or group level needs.

- Micro-level needs:

These are individual skills and knowledge needs that exist within an individual person. They may include various types of technical and behavioural knowledge and skills. These needs may also be described as individual needs.

The following table reflects the different dimensions in which needs for labour relations skills may exist:

TABLE 1-2: DIMENSIONS OF LABOUR RELATIONS SKILLS NEEDS

Societal level needs				MD
Organisational level needs				LR
Group level needs			SS	
Individual level needs	EE			
TRAINING LEVEL	Introductory	Advanced	Specialist	

The skills and knowledge needs of practitioners in the various dimensions may be explained as follows:

- MD - Needs in this dimension are usually related to the behaviour of senior managers and directors, senior union officials, senior government officials and labour relations managers.
- LR - Needs in this dimension are usually related to the behaviour of labour relations consultants or specialists.
- SS - Needs in this dimension are usually related to the behaviour of line managers, shop stewards, labour relations officers.
- EE - Needs in this dimension are usually related to the behaviour of employees.

Labour relations training for top, middle, and lower management levels, shop stewards and union officials has always been viewed as extremely important in all organisations for the effective implementation of procedures, programmes and policy (Tustin & Geldenhuys, 2000:228). The following groups of participants were traditionally viewed as important focal groups for training in labour relations:

New employees: Induction courses should address specific labour relations issues relevant to employees, for example grievance and disciplinary procedures and conditions of employment. This process gives the employer the opportunity to lay the foundation for a harmonious working environment. It contributes towards the maintenance of labour peace.

Supervisors and management: Supervisors and managers should receive training in the application of labour relations policy and procedures and in communication, problem-solving, and interactive skills.

Shop stewards: The organisation may wish to provide shop stewards with training related to their specific role in the organisation. Management should preferably consult with unions about training material and where possible, conduct the training jointly.

Reese (1983:57) proposed a generic model that provides guidelines for the minimum training required by various participants in labour relations. This model is reflected in Table 1-3. Although this model is outdated, it provides an indication of typical development needs in labour relations skills:

	1	2	3	4
1- awareness, awareness and disciplinary procedures				
2- communication and negotiating				
3- understanding and applying labour relations policy				
4- development and procedure				
(a) the union				
(b) the employer				
(c) the industry				
Legislation pertaining to IR and access up to Company				
Understanding the limits of one's own authority in IR				
Basic skills of:				
(a) communication				
(b) human relations				
(c) preparing cases				
(d) negotiation				
(e) grievance handling				
The human and social factors which influence the conduct of IR				

Source: Trustees, Future Industrial Relations Training for Management, Training And Research in Industrial Relations, Durban, December, 1984, pp. 79-82, adapted

TABLE 1-3: LEVELS OF TRAINING IN LABOUR RELATIONS

Key to symbols: ✓ Full training needed
 + Some training needed
 - Training not essential

Knowledge of	Senior managers	Line managers	Supervisors/foremen	IR specialists
Company's IR policies	✓	✓	✓	✓
Contracts, awards, agreements to which the company is party:				
(a) Underlying considerations, negotiations, enforcement	✓	+	+	✓
(b) specific terms and conditions of employment	✓	✓	✓	✓
Negotiating machinery:				
(a) to which the company is party	✓	+	+	✓
(b) within the company	✓	✓	+	✓
Pay system within the company	✓	+	+	✓
Pay systems (generally)	+	-	-	✓
Trade unions structures and organisations:				
(a) in the nation	+	-	-	✓
(b) in the district	✓	✓	+	✓
(c) in the industry	✓	✓	+	✓
(d) in the company	✓	✓	✓	✓
Role of employees in IR procedures of the company				
(a) job delegates (shop stewards)	✓	✓	✓	✓
(b) full-time union officials	✓	✓	✓	✓
(c) union executives	+	+	-	✓
Role of managerial and other senior staff in the industrial relations procedures of the organisation:				
(a) managers	✓	✓	✓	✓
(b) personnel staff	✓	✓	✓	✓
(c) supervisors	✓	✓	✓	✓
Own specific role in operating the IR procedures and in formulating policy.	✓	+	+	✓
Own specific role in:				
(a) disputes, grievance and disciplinary procedures	-	✓	✓	✓
(b) consultative and negotiating machinery	✓	✓	✓	✓
(c) formulating and advising on IR policy	-	-	-	✓
IR development and practices in:				
(a) the nation	+	+	-	✓
(b) the region	+	+	-	✓
(c) the industry	✓	+	-	✓
Legislation pertaining to IR and relevance to Company	✓	+	+	✓
Understanding the limits of one's own authority in IR	-	✓	✓	✓
Basic skills of:				
(a) communication	✓	✓	✓	✓
(b) human relations	✓	✓	✓	✓
(c) preparing cases	-	+	+	✓
(d) negotiation	✓	✓	+	✓
(e) grievance handling	+	✓	✓	✓
The human and social factors which influence the conduct of IR	✓	+	+	✓

Source: Brosnan, Peter, Industrial Relations Training For Management, *Training And Research in Industrial Relations*, Bangkok, December, 1980, pp. 39-40, adapted.

5.3 Using models as foundations for skills development interventions

Although the development of a comprehensive learning model for labour relations falls outside of the scope of this thesis, it remains important to be mindful of the fact that the development and accreditation of all formal training in South Africa is governed by laws and guidelines as prescribed in the South African Qualifications Authority Act and the Skills Development Act.

It should however be noted that models, such as the models proposed in this research, can serve as a type of roadmap that guides designers in developing training interventions. Nadler (1982:4) believes that a valid and reliable model will assist designers and learners to understand the essence of complicated processes. Models also enable training facilitators to represent reality in a simplified and comprehensible form. The use of models enables developers and facilitators of training interventions to structure interventions in a systematic format and procedure (Jerling, 1997:88). Benefits can also be derived from the use of valid theoretical models as points of departure and reference in the development and presentation of training interventions. Anglin (1991:116) shares the opinion that there are definite benefits in applying a systematic approach to the development of training interventions.

The following steps are generally applied in the development and presentation of learning interventions (Romiszowski, 1981:20; Tracy, 1984:42 & Nadler, 1982:12):

- (1) Analyse the environment and system in which the trainee operates.
- (2) Identify and analyse the specific tasks that will be performed.
- (3) Specify the required skills that trainees should possess.
- (4) Determine the capabilities and skills levels of trainees.
- (5) Identify detailed training and educational needs.
- (6) Develop the instructional model or instructional intervention.
- (7) Present the training intervention.
- (8) Evaluate the effectiveness of training.

It is believed that a validated model will contribute to the effective analysis and structuring of the activities identified above, although it should be emphasized that the mere use of a validated model will definitely not guarantee compliance with the multiple guidelines established by legislation, qualification authorities and skills development regulatory institutions.

5.4 Compliance with training legislation

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) has been empowered to establish a National Qualifications Framework (NQF), in an effort to ensure that all training and skills development interventions in South Africa comply with an integrated framework that will ensure effective skills development in the labour market. The NQF is presently divided into eight levels of qualifications. Specific level descriptors have been proposed to determine the level at which different qualifications should be registered.

TABLE 1-4: THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

THE NQF	
LEVEL 8	Doctorates , Further research
LEVEL 7	Higher degrees (Eg. Hons, Masters) Professional Qualifications
LEVEL 6	First Degrees (Eg. BA, BCom, BTech) Higher Diplomas
LEVEL 5	Diplomas (Eg. N Dip and equivalent) Occupational Certificates
LEVEL 4	School/College/Training Certificates (Gr 12)
LEVEL 3	School/College/Training Certificates (Gr 11)
LEVEL 2	School/College/Training Certificates (Gr 10)
LEVEL 1	Senior Phase (Gr 9) - ABET level 4 Intermediate phase - ABET level 3 Foundation phase - ABET level 2 Preschool - ABET level 1

Twelve National Standards Bodies (NSBs) oversee the development and registration of specific standards for skills development at different levels by numerous Standard Generating Bodies (SGBs). The actual facilitation of skills development that complies with prescribed standards has mostly been delegated to Sectoral Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) that were established in terms of the Skills Development Act. Skills development interventions are undertaken by accredited learning institutions, accredited service providers and accredited employers.

The formal development of labour relations practitioners at tertiary learning institutions must comply with the criteria that applies to qualifications registered at various higher levels of the NQF. This means that the training of labour relations practitioners should be founded on very specific skills based outcomes as prescribed by SAQA. These outcomes should be properly researched and aligned with the expectations of employers. Tertiary institutions are hereby forced to revisit current training practices and would therefore benefit by the introduction of a structured model approach to the development of labour relations practitioners.

Less formal labour relations skills development interventions applicable to supervisors, line managers, shop stewards and other non-specialist groupings participating in labour relations, also need to conform to the NQF accreditation criteria. (Witepski, 2000:6). This requires that training providers need to register skills development interventions with the overseeing SETA, in order to ensure compliance with the criteria set by SAQA. It is therefore important to ensure that all skills development interventions undertaken outside formal learning institutions comply with the skill outcomes based requirements of SAQA (Hattingh, 2001:32-35).

Service providers and employers are also forced to ensure that skills development interventions in this regard is structured. They would therefore also benefit by the introduction of a well-structured model approach to the development of the labour relations skills of the aforementioned groups

(Mercorio & Mercorio, 2000, 46-113). A further incentive to employers is that they may reclaim parts of the Skills Development Levy that has been paid to SETAs, if they conform to skill development guidelines (Babb, 200:32; Blumentahl, 2001:32).

Although a validated model will not provide an ultimate solution for the identification of skills development needs, it will at least provide a useful frame of reference for developing and facilitating skills development interventions in compliance with the requirements of skills development legislation.

6. OBJECTIVES OF THESIS

6.1 Introduction

Adversarial values and actions throughout the development of the economy have typified South African labour relations in the past. Affirmative movement was however made toward a more inclusive and participative approach to labour relations challenges with the promulgation of the new Labour Relations Act , Basic Conditions of Employment Act, Employment Equity Act , SAQA Act and the Skills Development Act.

Labour relations practitioners should be equipped to meet the challenges of a dynamic and complex labour relations system (IPM, 1994:2-6). In recent times competency based models emerged as the preferred way of running a business to ensure competitiveness (Sher, 2001:13). It is therefore imperative that labour relations practitioners possess the required insight, knowledge and skills competencies to ensure that they will be able to adapt, manage and lead in a dynamic practice environment. In this way they will contribute to the establishment and maintenance of harmony and prosperity in society.

The challenges of a dynamic environment, in which labour relations practitioners and other participants in labour relations are required to function, necessitate the development of a valid structured model. Such a model should represent the

components, relationships and influences that are typical of the current labour relations system of South Africa. Only then will it serve as a valid generic frame of reference that can be applied for purposes of practice, strategic planning, analysis, research and the development of South African labour relations practitioners involved at different operational levels in various spheres of labour relations practice.

OVERVIEW OF THESIS

6.2 Primary objective

The primary objective of this thesis is to develop a validated theoretical model that will represent and explain the most important components and processes that are typical of the current labour relations system of South Africa.

6.3 Secondary objectives

Due to the complex nature of the study and the multiple variables that have an effect on South African labour relations, secondary objectives were identified to ensure the systematic attainment of the primary objective. The secondary objectives were sixfold, namely to:

- i. Conduct a literature study on the nature of theoretical systems and models.
- ii. Perform a content analysis of definitions and models in order to identify the common components and behavioural principles that are characteristic of the South African labour relations system.
- iii. Identify specific components and principles that should be represented and explained in theoretical models of the South African labour relations system.
- iv. Use a panel of experts to determine the validity of theoretical models.

- v. Represent the South African labour relations system as a valid theoretical model and explain the components and processes related to the model.
- vi. Propose related valid theoretical models that represent labour relations practice at three different levels.

7. OVERVIEW OF THESIS

This thesis has been divided into eight Chapters. This first Chapter introduces the nature of the problem and establishes the need for the research being undertaken. Chapter two contains a comprehensive overview of the research methodology that was applied for purposes of this thesis. Chapter three provides an overview of theory related to the systems approach to the analysis and explanation of human behaviour phenomena, as well as a discussion of the nature, construction and application of models that are applied for this purpose. Applicable definitions, theoretical models and fundamental principles of labour relations are discussed in Chapters four and five. Specific research findings related to the validity of the model at different levels of practice are reflected and discussed in Chapters six and seven. Finally conclusions and recommendations are made and discussed in Chapter eight.