

1990

Selecting content for an introductory training course in industrial relations

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SELECTING CONTENT FOR AN INTRODUCTORY
TRAINING COURSE IN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

By

Helen Handmer

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Award of

Bachelor of Education with Honours

at the School of Education
Western Australian College of Advanced Education



Date of Submission: January 1990



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Abstract

Industrial relations in Australia is undergoing a period of change. Increasing emphasis on co-operation and collaboration between unions and management at an enterprise level has seen more people become involved in workplace organisation, and hence in industrial relations issues. The highly regulated systems of industrial relations, nationally and in this State, and their effect in the workplace, are not readily understood by workplace participants. This lack of knowledge creates difficulties in industrial relations. The research project therefore, was directed towards the selection of content for a short introductory training course that would provide necessary, basic information on our industrial relations system.

The Delphi technique was chosen as the most appropriate means of identifying the essential knowledge base which would constitute course content. Not only could the technique be used for making content selections. It could also be used to obtain the reasons and thus the justification for making such selections.

A nine-member panel with acknowledged expertise across a broad range of industrial relations interests made up the respondent population. Panelists' opinions were collected, summarised, then re-submitted to the panel with an invitation to review their opinions in the light of the group summary. This process was repeated three times - the first consisting of individual progressively structured interviews, the other two being written surveys.

A high level of consensus was achieved, both in content selections and in the reasons for choosing such topics. This resulted in the development of a course outline consisting of the following major topics - historical overview, overview of the formal industrial relations system, role of trade unions and employers, industrial relations in the workplace and communications. Sub-content for each heading was also identified and included in the resulting outline, with justification in the form of reasons for those selections.

The course outline offers a guide to content suitable for inclusion in a short (two to three day) introductory training course to the Western Australian industrial relations system. It is directed towards the needs of key employer and employee representatives in the workplace who, whilst not industrial relations specialists,

nonetheless have a role in workplace decision making. The focus of the course is upon providing information which is fundamental to an understanding of industrial relations at both the formal and workplace levels. The reasons given for selection show the validity and relevance of the content for workplace participants. As such the course is capable of adaptation to a wide range of individual learning and industry needs.

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed:

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Helen Handmer.

Helen Handmer.

Acknowledgements -

The time, co-operation and expert opinion given by specialists in the field of industrial relations is gratefully acknowledged.

Commissioner Tony Beech,
Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission.

Ms Pam Bentley,
Confederation of Western Australian Industry, Inc.

Mr Brian Brand,
Office of Industrial Relations.

Mr Peter Cogan,
Department of Employment, Education and Training.

Mr Tony Cooke,
Trades & Labor Council of Western Australia.

Commissioner Jack Gregor,
Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission.

Mr Bob Handmer,
Transport Workers Union.

Mr Jim McGinty,
Federated Miscellaneous Workers Union.

Mr John Spurling,
Ministry of Labour.

Sincere thanks also for the support of Mr John Sharp-Collett of the Amalgamated Metal Workers' and Shipwrights' Union as well as the time and effort given by Jackie Serisier.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Study

Preliminary Comments

This report details the research background, methods and resultant findings in developing an outline for a short introductory training course in industrial relations. As well as specifying course content, the reasons for selection are given - thus the choices may be judged as appropriate.

The Delphi Technique was chosen as being the most appropriate means, in the circumstances, of developing such a course. At the outset it must be stated that the purpose of this project was not to research the effectiveness of the Delphi Technique; rather, the technique was utilised as a recognised research method to investigate and determine content appropriate to an introductory training course in industrial relations.

Further, the reader is asked to consider the "fledgling nature" of training and development in the context of Australian business and industry, and, at least in this State, its absence from mainstream (institutional) educational theory, development, practice and teacher training. Therefore there is no attempt in this study to relate the content selected or the selection process to wider educational issues such as curriculum theory and development. The relationships between devising short training and development courses in an industry context and curriculum theory warrants a major research effort in its own right.

In short, the study was not undertaken from an educationalist's perspective as such, but rather from an organisational perspective where a pressing need to provide industrial relations information had been identified.

It is acknowledged that a degree of caution must be used in interpreting the results of this research. Ultimately, its usefulness can only be tested and proven through practical application. Therefore, the reader is asked to be mindful of these comments and to maintain an awareness of the developmental and qualitative nature of the research.

Background to the Research Study

Australia's inconsistent economic performance throughout the 1980's and, in particular, its persistent current account deficit problems, were and still are the focus of much attention. This has led to widespread recognition and acceptance of the need for a fundamental restructuring of the Australian economy.

The perceived urgency of the need for reform has been reflected in recent National and State Wage Decisions. In March 1987 the decision of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission set down a new wage fixing principle, "Restructuring and Efficiency". Management and unions were thereby informed that attitudinal change was required. They were to embark upon co-operative industrial relations (as opposed to confrontationist) at an enterprise level in order to remove restrictive management and work practices. Through such concessions, productivity and efficiency would improve, and a wage increase be justified.

This was followed by the August 1988 National Wage Case Decision, with its Structural Efficiency Principle, which facilitated fundamental restructuring in the way work is organised and performed. Again the Federal Tribunal emphasised

the need for a consultative, collaborative approach to decision making at an enterprise level.

These National Wage Decisions were adopted by the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission in its counterpart State Wage Cases.

Similarly, the most recent August 1989 National Wage Case Decision has maintained and further progressed the objectives of structural efficiency. The Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission again adopted the same provisions in the State Wage Case Reasons for Decision which issued on the 8th September 1989.

Such an approach coincides with, and doubtless contributes to, the development of the "new industrial relations" which emphasise a human relations theme. According to Wood (1986) this focuses upon the use of co-operative strategies; attempts to link wages more directly to profitability; with a shift away from scientific/production line management systems to more flexible and less divisive arrangements such as those espoused by the human relations movement.

The approach would seem to have the support of the Federal Government and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (A.C.T.U.). This is reflected in the joint A.C.T.U. and Trade Development Council 1987

Report of their mission to Western Europe, contained in the Australia Reconstructed document. It also appears to be supported by at least one employer peak council, the Confederation of Australian Industry, as evidenced in its joint statement with the A.C.T.U. on "Participative Practices - A Co-operative Approach to Improving Efficiency and Productivity in Australian Industry" (1988).

The net effect, both through directive and economic necessity (which demands increasing competitiveness for enterprise and industry survival) is widespread rationalisation and award restructuring throughout both public and private sectors. This requires an unprecedented level of union and management co-operation at the enterprise level. In turn, this means more people become involved in workplace organisation, thus inevitably, in industrial relations issues.

Nature of the Research Problem

Few of these people, other than the designated industrial relations specialists, have an opportunity to acquire information about the wider industrial relations system within which they must operate. Such a knowledge gap has been evident for some years in overseas studies. Workplace "players" lack a common understanding of industrial relations

issues and are unaware of the consequences of their decisions, both for their own immediate industrial relations climate and in terms of the requirements of the macro system of regulation. (Temporal and Baxter 1981; Wooldridge 1980). Mullholland's (1983) summary goes to the heart of the problem -

There is, in short, a need for a "knowledge base" of considerable scope, the systematic acquisition of which, in industrial relations as in other spheres, provides the indispensable foundation for professional competence (p.23).

To put it in Scriven and Roth's (1978) terms, the need in this situation can be expressed as a base line set of information below which practice is unacceptable, or at least difficult.

There exists then, a need for knowledge and understanding of the non-negotiables of our industrial relations system. These are set by statute, arbitrary regulation, policy, case precedent and established custom and practice. Further, as determined by the respondents in this study, there is also a need for a fundamental awareness or understanding of other elements that go to make up our industrial relations system - such as its history and the role of communication.

The nature of the problem addressed in this research study therefore, was that of identifying the content of the knowledge base necessary for a basic understanding of industrial relations, in order to make such information available to those in the workplace who have need of it.

Contribution to the Resolution of the Problem

By selecting the content which comprises that essential knowledge base, and using it as the basis of a short introductory course to the industrial relations system in Western Australia, it was hoped to provide a local remedy to the knowledge gap problem.

It can be noted that the short courses currently available are usually run by either employer or employee groups for, and in the interests of, their respective memberships. As such, they fail to reflect the spirit of co-operation called for by the Federal Tribunal and echoed by the various State Tribunals. A need therefore appeared for course criteria to be developed and content selected on a non-partisan basis, to facilitate a common understanding of the industrial relations environment.

Purpose of the Research Study

In a basic developmental research study such as this it was difficult to frame research questions or hypothesise to advantage. Hence the preceding need was identified, outlined and placed in its contemporary context. This enabled the object of the study to be meaningfully considered.

The purpose of the study was to select and justify content for a short training course which would provide an introduction to the Western Australian industrial relations system. An adaptation of the Delphi technique was developed as the most suitable means of achieving this.

The aim of the study was to develop a course outline which would -

- (a) supply introductory information on the fundamentals of the system and its impact on workplace decisions
- (b) be applicable across a wide range of public and private sector industry
- (c) have joint application to union and management representatives.

The target population of the course was identified as key people in the workplace - shop stewards, union representatives on various workplace committees, honorary union officials, line and senior management. Thus likely course participants would be people, other than designated industrial relations (I.R.) specialists, who could be described as novices. Such key people were defined as those who find themselves involved, or likely to be involved, in industrial relations because of their decision making responsibilities.

Thus, content was to be chosen to meet this hypothetical target group's need for basic information which would improve their understanding of industrial relations and how the system affects them.

Inherent in this was the belief that -

- (a) such an introductory course would provide a common conceptual framework and factual basis upon which to build acceptable workplace industrial relations practices, as well as subsequent learning experiences.
- (b) The knowledge gap of the target population (non I.R. specialists) was such that they would be unreliable identifiers of the necessary content.

- (c) In such a situation the use of expert opinion, through the Delphi technique, was appropriate and there would be little basis for refuting the quality of such judgements.
- (d) Nevertheless, to enhance both understanding and the acceptability of the study (and the course), the expert judgements must be justified.
- (e) The justification thus given, in turn needed to be capable of sustaining qualitative assessment. The reasons for selection had to be acceptable in terms of the commonly recognised content selection criteria of significance, validity, relevance and utility in the workplace setting (Print 1988, pp.111-113). Further, the reasons for selection of content should be plausible and capable of confirmation in terms of a commonsense recognition of what seems fitting in that situation. The veracity of this study, to borrow from Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis (1976), must be guaranteed by the "shock of recognition" (p.143).

Parameters

In concluding this section of the report, clarification as to what lies beyond the scope and purpose of the study is given.

- (a) The study was confined to selecting and justifying content for an introductory knowledge/awareness based course on our industrial relations system. Along with providing information, the content was also directed at developing understanding, for how else can the information be applied in the workplace? However, the selection of content was limited to this, as the development of skills and attitudes in industrial relations were considered to be separate, and secondary, issues.

- (b) Selection of content should not be confused with curriculum development, which is a much broader exercise. Hence there was no attempt to include formalised course aims and objectives, or implementation or evaluation plans in the content outline. These elements lie beyond the scope of this study. (However see pp.7-8 of this Report for aims that were fundamental to the research project and hence, content development).

(c) As course content was selected and justified, it also appeared that the course might serve to educate and to promote change in the directions sought, for example, by the Federal and State Tribunals. Whilst this could be a worthy objective, particularly in terms of contemporary industrial relations, as far as this study was concerned it remained consequential. Thus the focus of the study was not directed away from selecting content that reflected the essential preliminary knowledge domain.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Relevant Research and Theory

Before proceeding with a review of literature relevant to this dissertation, the reader is reminded of the precise aim of the study, which is to select content for an introductory training course in industrial relations. To avoid any confusion, a proper distinction is drawn between the terms "curriculum development" and "content selection".

Curriculum development is a generic term which incorporates a number of elements. These include, but are not limited to, planning, designing, setting objectives, selecting content, choosing instructional methods and evaluating. There are many definitions of curriculum development and no unanimity as to which is best.

However, Print (1987) states that within the literature a broad definition of curriculum development has gained consensus. Thus he defines curriculum development as "the process of planning, implementing and evaluating learning opportunities intended to produce desired changes in learners" (p.15).

Content selection, the focus of this study, is a part of the process of curriculum development. According to Print (1987) -

One of the first tasks facing a curriculum developer, armed with a set of recommendations from a situational analysis, is to select appropriate content to meet those objectives (p.109).

Content itself, is the subject matter of the teaching-learning process. Selecting content is part of a wider process of curriculum development. How a curriculum developer goes about the task of selecting content varies. Content may be determined from the findings of a situational analysis, as referred to in the above quote from Print. Or a different approach may be dictated by the exigencies of the industry or enterprise in which those responsible for the training and development of adult learners find themselves placed. Therefore, contemporary approaches to content selection in this field are examined, via a review of the training and development literature.

Selecting Content for Post-Employment Training Purposes

Three broad approaches to content selection can be identified from the literature. These include the oft referred to needs or situational analyses,

pre and in-course participative planning modules, and expert survey methods which also serve to validate content.

Training needs analysis. The first - needs or situational analyses - essentially rely upon job analysis and the definition of training needs to direct selection. Vaught, Hoy and Buchanan (1985) adopt a somewhat broader approach of "organisational analysis" to determine where training efforts are needed or are likely to be most worthwhile. They describe three categories of organisational analysis - the personnel audit, organisational effectiveness analysis and organisational climate analysis. They also describe the operations analysis which determines the behaviour required in a given job and so what the employee needs to be taught in order to do that job. The final form outlined by Vaught et. al. (1985) is personnel analysis which involves performance appraisal followed by a diagnostic analysis to identify employee deficiencies.

Whilst these are recognised and accepted as a means of determining learning needs, hence appropriate content, it is not always possible or feasible to carry out the detailed analysis required. This is particularly so when the training course is not the product of on-going in-house assessment but is being developed externally, or,

for example, when the training is directed at industry groupings as opposed to a particular organisation.

Participative approaches to determining content. Smith and Leary (1978), in developing strategies for conducting joint union/management training in industrial relations, adopted a modified approach to the needs analysis. They included a diagnostic phase in their planning. This involved surveying the current industrial relations situation and the perceived needs of all parties involved.

The information collected was used by the trainers in designing the course and later by the participants as a working tool. Smith and Leary also used this to "seed" their training ideas with the participants.

It has to be recognised that this diagnostic phase succeeds where the trainers have been invited by the organisation concerned to set up a joint training programme. That is, its success is dependent upon the co-operation of the organisation, management and the unions. It could not be successfully utilised to determine content for a basic course across a multiplicity of manufacturing and service industries. The survey requirements would be too vast.

Even when outside help has been formally enlisted to develop a training course, needs analysis may be prohibited. Such was the situation encountered by Moore (1978) and his colleagues in the Department of Management at the University of Otago. Having been approached over a number of years by the troubled meat industry in New Zealand to provide suitable short courses, the University staff's proposals for an investigation of training needs and for basic research into the problems of the industry were continually rejected by the industry. Therefore it was decided that if investigation could not precede training, a compromise had to be found which combined investigation with training. Hence a relatively unstructured workshop approach was devised.

This involved University staff in reviewing available research on industrial relations in the meat industry, as a starting point. All participants were asked to complete a questionnaire aimed at yielding basic data relating to their jobs and organisations. Each participant was also asked to keep a diary for one week.

Once the questionnaires and diaries were analysed, a tentative course framework was drawn up. After the initial report back and discussion of the analyses was completed, the workshop was intended to follow the problems of the participants.

Crucial to this was the selection of decision points where training staff decided, on the basis of verbal and non-verbal feed-back from participants, the direction in which to proceed in subsequent sessions. To provide for the directions in which the workshop may have developed, staff were required to prepare far more content material than could be covered in the time available.

Moore (1978) was very clear about the defects in this compromise approach. He did not see it as an "equally effective substitute for training based on thorough investigation and analysis" (p.22). Rather, he saw the basic workshop as enabling specific needs and problems to be identified, thus making it possible to move to a more structured approach in follow-up workshops, using participants' problems as primary inputs. Again, even its acknowledged limited success is dependent upon the course organisers being in a position to select and communicate with participants prior to the commencement of the course.

The second major method of selecting content involves using participative pre or in-course planning modules - not as a compromise, but as a deliberate strategy. From an industrial relations perspective this allows for consultation between the parties with regard to course planning. Educationally speaking, the approach conforms to

notions of learner participation in and ownership of the learning process, self-management and learning to learn.

One such study in joint industrial relations training was reported by Temporal and Baxter (1981). In this case the company wanted to depart from its paternalistic approach to industrial relations and introduce greater employee involvement.

Whilst semi-structured interviews, covering a cross section of employees including union representatives, supervisors, departmental heads and senior managers, were conducted to obtain essential base information, the temptation to map out workshop content from this was resisted. Rather, a consultative process was utilised whereby a meeting with all participants was held ten to fourteen days before the scheduled workshops. In that way participants' pre-conceived ideas on industrial relations were accommodated in the workshop programme.

This resulted in each workshop varying in content, although there were elements common to all.

Temporal and Baxter (1981) rate this consultation stage of the programme as being successful, resulting in commitment being gained

from everyone, with a feeling that the company was genuine in its attempts to adopt a consultative stance.

Again it is important to note that this is a case study of in-house training, involving only one company, where trainers had ready access to participants as well as organisational back-up and support.

Scriven (1984) is another one of a number of authors who examine means of involving employees in planning and decision making about the content of their training programmes.

He draws parallels with the characteristics of learning circles (based on quality circles) and the work of learning theorists such as Malcolm Knowles (1978). Knowles, Scriven points out, emphasised that adult learning should be seen as a process of personal change. Knowles focused on the importance of building new learning on existing knowledge and experience.

Scriven also cites Thomas and Harri-Augstein (1982) who stress the importance of adult learners taking responsibility for their own learning and becoming self-organising. He also refers to the benefits of coaching and collaboration in promoting learning - presumably he has approaches such as

clinical supervision and the "buddy" system in mind - and embodies all these concepts in his learning circles model.

The model involves all those who have an interest in promoting a particular piece of learning coming together to discuss the task, e.g. - a group of employees, their line manager, a trainer. They then explore what needs to be learned and why, and plan how this is to occur. The next phase - the support phase - is concerned with learning to learn. It involves shared experiences, using the trainer as a resource, helping each other understand and become more proficient in the learning process. The group also works out and completes evaluations.

The learning circle places the responsibility for learning on the trainees, allowing the trainer to act as facilitator. The trainee is encouraged to make maximum use of her/his existing experience. Creating understanding of the processes of learning is crucial to the success of the model.

This seems to be a valid and worthwhile approach in the context Scriven suggests. First of all the learners initiate the process, which should mean they are motivated. The programme content is clearly not the result of someone else perceiving a need. Secondly, the group has a shared work background to draw upon that, whilst it will not

obviate learning variables, significantly reduces situational variables. It seems well suited to small in-house training groups and could certainly be adapted to industrial relations training in that context.

The approach outlined by Davies (1981) includes an in-course planning module where the participants and trainers plan content jointly and prioritise the needs they have identified. They also develop and institute evaluation and course adaptation procedures. This is usually done by dividing participants into small groups who then report back. Self-management is built into the planning and other procedures. It is specifically designed for ad hoc courses and is a method favoured by the national body of the Trade Union Training Authority.

Davies' (1981) assumptions and concerns are in keeping with contemporary trends in adult education - utilising existing experience and knowledge, sharing alternative views, learning by doing rather than via teaching, recognising that individuals learn in different ways and that people can and do direct their own learning. However, his proposals appear fuzzy and beset by difficulties.

Davies himself believes his approach is advantageous because it maximises the available planning resources, giving participants a better

understanding of and commitment to the course objectives.

It is clear that there are areas of content which are pre-determined and not negotiable. Davies also makes it clear that there are a number of pitfalls which must be avoided, including not utilising the data engendered in the group sessions, too much trainer direction where it is not necessary and vice versa, and a failure to model the values of participation and self-management.

However there seem to be other difficulties not considered by Davies. Firstly, the approach does not really allow for self-management - management is contingent upon a group consensus being reached, or appearing to be reached. There is a possibility of a vocal minority dominating the group, with others neither committed to nor satisfied with course content. Secondly, as with any consensus activity, there is danger that no-one's expectations will be met. Thirdly, participants' contributions may be irrelevant and time-wasting, but according to Davies they must be accepted. If participants come to the course with an expectation of experiencing the relationship between participation and learning, Davies' insistence on such acceptance may be justifiable. However, if participants are expecting a more immediate and practical information gain, it

is difficult to justify the intrusion of useless contributions.

Further, the model seems to have an implicit assumption that participants will be able to identify what they need to know. Such an assumption is reasonable in Scriven's (1984) learning circle model where participants have initiated a gathering because of a perceived knowledge gap. But it is not one of the givens in any group that responds to an ad hoc course in a pre-determined area. In that circumstance participants may not have an appropriate knowledge base upon which to draw.

It seems that such a course would need to be skilfully constructed and co-ordinated, and even then there may be a mismatch between the approach, the objectives and the content.

A different approach that adopts participative planning for the conference mode of training is contributed by Caldwell and Davies (1981). Starting from the basis that the conference is a widely used form of adult learning in which there is too much emphasis on content and too little on process, they outline a variety of conference forms and then suggest a model for a search conference - "a participative, planning conference used in many settings" (p.9).

The search conference model appears to avoid a number of difficulties evident in Davies' (1981) ad hoc approach previously outlined. The key elements are a careful consideration of purposes and the actual selection of participants. Specifically, Caldwell and Davies' (1981) search conference seeks out participants who would be in a position to implement conference outcomes, those who would be affected by such outcomes and those with special understanding, knowledge or commitment in the given area. Having done that, the essence of the approach to content selection and other programme requirements is collaboration.

The approach is not suitable for trainers under severe time constraints - it can take up to 12 months of planning. However, it seems a useful approach when used in the carefully defined manner for which it was intended. Caldwell and Davies (1981) acknowledge that the search conference borrows extensively from Leland Bradford's (1948) principles for the work conference which is essentially a problem-solving approach.

It is not difficult to see how the search conference could successfully be used to select and justify content in a programme for industrial relations specialists. Indeed, the approach relies on the selection of such participants. It is clearly not meant to be applicable in areas where

the objective is to provide a primary knowledge base for novices in that field.

Expert opinion. Whilst very little of the training and development literature focuses specifically on content selection, still less is concerned with justification or validation of the content selected. Much is taken as read, with an assumption of some form of needs investigation or identification having been carried out. This is not surprising, nor even necessarily faulty. The literature seemingly owes more to organisational theory and realities than it does to educational theory. It is thus pragmatic, being concerned ultimately with tangible results in terms of organisational effectiveness, rather than adherence to educational dogma as such.

However, in the third major approach to content selection to be reviewed, validation of content is addressed. Ford and Wroten (1982) aimed to describe a methodology which addressed deficiencies, which they cite Goldstein (1980) as identifying - namely that the existing training literature failed to provide strategies which link training evaluation with training needs re-assessment and programme re-design, and that no procedure currently exists which empirically evaluates the content validity of an existing training programme.

Ford and Wroten's approach consists of demonstrating the extent of the relationship between the content of the programme and the content of the job.

The method involves job evaluation - that is specifying the knowledge, skills, abilities and other personal characteristics necessary for job performance. They borrow from and acknowledge Ebel's (1977) content validity as a strategy which refers to an evaluation of the representativeness or adequacy of sampling the content domain of the job.

To establish content Ford and Wroten used panel sessions and a survey technique. They set up three panels of experts - training staff and previous course participants - who were responsible for generating the list of required knowledge, skills, abilities and other personal characteristics (KSAO's) they believed should be included in a training programme, using a modified brain-storming approach. The groups were then combined to categorise the statements into sub-groups. A revision panel was then formed to refine and revise this.

Next, a survey was developed to ensure that training content had been accurately and comprehensively identified - training staff and the most recent programme graduates were surveyed. At

the same time the KSAO's for the job itself were drawn from the KSAO's identified in the training content, and this was compared with job analyses of the same job from external sources. Two panels of practitioners were then formed. They met on three separate occasions to review, edit and revise the KSAO statements based upon job analysis.

These steps provided two lists of KSAO statements - one from the training content domain and one from the job analyses. Independent panels of practitioners, as well as the researchers, then worked to place the two lists of KSAO's into job relevant categories. Every practitioner in the target city was then surveyed to determine if the KSAO's identified were required to perform the job.

The next phase was to systematically assess the job relatedness of the training content. This was done through an adaptation of Lawshe's (1975) content validity ratio approach (Ford and Wroten, 1982, p.7). This required the use of "subject matter experts" to rate the importance or essentiality of each item (KSAO) for job performance. This was statistically analysed and any item perceived by more than 50% of the experts to be important was deemed to have some degree of job relatedness. As more experts beyond 50% saw the item as important, it was deemed to have a greater degree of content validity.

As can be seen, this is a highly complex, time consuming and intensive approach. It is difficult to see how it could be utilised in the everyday world of employee training where time and available personnel at least are constrained. It is also difficult, given the enormous resources this approach requires, to justify its use except to establish or re-design a long-term programme that is not likely to require constant change. Ford and Wroten were actually researching a programme for police recruits, so it had a long term application for significant numbers of trainees. It is doubtful whether the method as described is suitable for selecting even basic industrial relations content because the industrial relations area is marked by a high degree of change. Whilst the parameters can be seen as constant, each National Wage Decision, new Industrial Appeal Court or Full Bench judgements, economic developments, executive decisions and so on can impact profoundly on industrial relations in the macro and micro sense, requiring an immediate change in direction or alteration in practice.

This problem is addressed by Weaver (1988), who states -

One of the most frustrating obstacles presenters of "state-of-the-art" subjects encounter is being sure that the content of their presentations is, in fact, timely and relevant. This is particularly true for

educators and trainers whose
clients are business and
industry (p.18).

Weaver suggests that trainers can use the Delphi technique to obtain a consensus from a panel of experts within a given field. The technique, as outlined by Weaver, is essentially very simple. The opinions of each panel member are methodically collected and summarised. The trainer then submits the summary to the panel members again and invites those experts to re-think their opinions. The trainer repeats the process until the experts reach a consensus or until it is evident that no consensus is possible on a given issue.

Weaver sees Delphi as a promising technique for eliciting the recommendations of a panel or jury of experts concerning the content of a meaningful and timely course of study. The results of such research, Weaver believes, provide a reliable and valid starting point for building a training programme to meet the needs of prospective clients represented by the participants on the panel.

Content selection - summary. Of the approaches to content selection reviewed, it seemed an application of the Delphi technique offered the most appropriate method in relation to this study.

If the deductive logic presented in Chapter 1 of this report and specifically in the sections titled Background to the Research Study and Nature of the Research Problem (pp.1-5), is accepted as sound, a form of broad situational analysis is thus provided.

This analysis gave rise to an over-all goal - namely to provide basic information on industrial relations which would overcome a generally recognised knowledge gap. However, a significantly more detailed training needs analysis would need to be conducted if content were to be selected via such a method. The audit requirements in determining the gap between the knowledge and understanding currently held by key novice players across the public and private sectors, and the knowledge and understanding required to competently handle the industrial relations aspects of their daily work would require surveying on a massive scale. The value of such a survey could be arguably small, yielding already known information regarding the absence of an adequate knowledge base in industrial relations. This would leave the researcher in need of some other means of firstly, identifying the requisite knowledge base for basic competence in industrial relations, to secondly, enable the exact nature of the deficits in novice knowledge to be identified.

Similarly, participative approaches to content selection, in the context of this study, are open to the same criticism. On the face of it, it would appear that participants, having inadequate knowledge of the industrial relations system, would be unreliable identifiers of the scope of their learning needs in this area. (This does not preclude a participative approach being adopted as a learning strategy - unfortunately this line of discussion lies outside the research study).

Therefore, the alternative approach to content selection, that of using expert opinion, seemed to be the most appropriate, reliable and valid means available. Of the two such approaches reviewed, the Delphi technique offered the most likely remedy to the problem at hand. Given that the micro economic restructuring of Australian industry was and is being largely driven through changes to the industrial relations system, there seemed an urgent need (and irrefutable argument) to access expert knowledge and views in the area, by a method both sound and most direct.

However, before proceeding with this approach, other applications of the Delphi technique were reviewed in an effort to determine its viability.

Further Applications of the Delphi Technique

Firstly, educational applications of the Delphi technique were reviewed. This was followed by a review of the technique as a participative approach to organisational decision making.

Delphi in education. McGaw, Browne and Rees (1974) examined applications of the Delphi technique in education. Describing it as "a sequential procedure for gathering and sharing opinions about particular issues, without face to face debate" (p.1), McGaw et. al. (1974) point out that the technique was originally used to generate focussed views about the future.

They view the technique as eliminating such unwanted features of normal group activity as specious persuasion, the maintenance of public positions, a coercion to conform to majority opinion.

Whilst they outline many adaptations of Delphi in education, including exploratory and informative studies, interestingly the selection of curriculum content is not included. Certainly, they do not exclude Delphi from being applied in this way, giving a very broad perspective on the utility of Delphi for planners.

The use of the Delphi technique as an instrument for curriculum evaluation and planning was explored by Ian Gordon (1974). He commences with a brief history of the method and its early common applications. He refers to the criticisms of Weaver (1972), who conducted a detailed evaluation of the early Delphi procedures and so argued for modifications with different applications. Specifically, Gordon cites Weaver as maintaining that researchers must ensure that participants are expert in the area under consideration.

Gordon (1974) then goes on to point out that establishing a reasonable consensus of opinion about something may not be the same as establishing its worth. However he qualifies this by suggesting that in a non-predictive situation, such as gathering information on priorities or values, consensus itself does become the important factor. Thus Gordon sees that the Delphi technique can be an effective planning tool when used to probe organisational priorities, organise and shape opinion through feedback, and when used for planning - provided that experts (Gordon's emphasis) are given reasons as feedback.

The bulk of Gordon's (1974) paper is devoted to brief examination of various applications of the Delphi technique in educational areas. Such case studies demonstrate both the range of applications

and procedural modifications. They involve educational planning, administration, curriculum development (goal setting and prioritising, not content selection) and evaluation - all areas which fall within the scope of normative forecasting. This is the area within which Gordon views Delphi as being most appropriate. He points out that whilst the basic Delphi procedures will be applied in normative forecasting, changes in method and indeed application are likely with this change in emphasis away from predictive forecasting.

According to Dalkey and Rourke (1971), whom Gordon cites, two things have become apparent through research into the value of using a Delphi technique for studying opinion. The first is that group opinions are of more value than individual ones in planning and evaluation. The second is that the Delphi technique could be regarded as a significant advance in opinion technology. Gordon (1974) quotes Dalkey and Rourke -

For subject matters where the best available information is the judgement of knowledgeable individuals, a systematic and controlled process of querying and aggregating the judgements of members of a group has distinct advantage over the traditional group discussion (p.11).

In looking at the potential use of Delphi, Gordon (1974) sees it as being applicable in the development of vocational curricula. He notes that the base from which course development and evaluation proceeds in such technical courses is the job profile and says that Delphi techniques offer a "most appropriate procedure for generating such job profiles in complex industries" (p.13).

He also asserts that Delphi would ensure industry's involvement as well as ascertaining its degree of commitment to both the proposed profile and ensuing course development. In this latter comment Gordon is presumably influenced by conclusions drawn in one of the case studies he cites. Gordon reviews Anderson's (1970) use of the Delphi technique to clarify policies and set objectives in a school system. Anderson believed that a side effect of the procedure was increased staff involvement and awareness through participating in the decision making process. Gordon accepted this at face value.

It is interesting to compare Gordon's (1974) suggestions with Weaver's (1988) experience. (A brief outline of Weaver's main points can be found at pp.29-30 of this review). Weaver was actually determining content in a highly technical area - that of statistical process control. He found that the Delphi procedure gave the participating panel of

experts a sense of involvement and ownership in the programme. He concluded that the method offers the further advantage of enlarging the support base for the programme within the social and industrial communities of the study participants.

Participative decision making.

These

themes are pursued further by Wedley (1980). Wedley states that the Delphi technique has developed far beyond its traditional role as a forecasting tool. He sees its most powerful use as being an aid to decision making.

Corporations and other organisations are now using the Delphi technique to formulate policy options, to evaluate budget allocations, to establish manpower requirements, to specify corporate objectives, and to determine the quality of life. In these problem solving roles, the Delphi technique has been beneficial in generating viable solutions, facilitating alternative evaluation, aiding the decision choice, and leading to a decision commitment (Wedley 1980, p.1).

It is not difficult to see how these broad uses of Delphi could have equal application in the area of content selection, which can be viewed as a kind of problem solving exercise - one which involves formulating and evaluating viable options before making final choices.

The essential feature of the Delphi process, according to Wedley, is that it systematically refines anonymous group opinion. It provides a method of group communication which allows the group, as a whole, to deal with complex problems. Interestingly, Wedley notes that Delphi is a two-way process, with information flowing in both directions. Through the processes of analysis and feedback, information is received and imparted and so decisions are made. Thus Delphi itself can be an educative tool.

Wedley believes that the first Delphi questioning period is the easiest. Here the problem under consideration is described and the panel, "people who have sound judgements on how the problem can be resolved" (Wedley 1980, p.3), suggest alternatives. In the second round, suggestions are edited for conciseness and duplication of ideas - Wedley emphasises that suggestions are edited and not censored. The participants' combined ideas are fed back to them for rating, with comment or further suggestions accepted. In round three, Wedley suggests that items may be censored, with the lowest rankings being discarded from further consideration.

Wedley states that three rounds are usually sufficient to generate useful ideas and to determine which of those ideas have merit. He has found that

the marginal increase in consensus from having additional rounds does not usually justify the effort. The exception to this is when the technique is being used for a series of related studies and new information is being sought in subsequent rounds.

As Wedley (1980) points out, his explanation of the Delphi procedure "is only the codification of a logical procedure for allowing a group of people to participate in a decision" (p.9). All authors reviewed agree that the procedure itself - the design of questionnaires, analysis of responses and so on - will vary depending upon the nature of the study.

Wedley also confirms the benefits of Delphi which set it apart from other participative techniques. Specifically, Wedley agrees that the group responses represent more unique and better quality ideas than could have been achieved from group conferences or brainstorming. Like McGaw, Browne and Rees (1974), he points out that the Delphi technique avoids many of the dysfunctional psychological factors associated with open group discussion. He agrees that Delphi participation can result in increased commitment to the implementation of programmes so derived.

Wedley highlights other Delphi benefits such as participants having the opportunity to re-assess and

change their views with the benefit of feedback. He points out that second and succeeding rounds involve evaluation of each of the generated alternatives, whilst other techniques generally have only one evaluation and perspective. He says that Delphi, by providing quantitative measures, is a more objective technique which is helpful for subjective type problems involving value judgements (Wedley 1980, p.11).

Having identified these benefits, Wedley is quick to point out that the results of a Delphi study do not provide scientific truths. As Delphi has many modifications, it can produce many different possible answers. Thus the decision choice need not be dictated by the Delphi results - rather decision making is aided by the available information. Wedley emphasises the responsibility the decision maker carries to correctly interpret and feedback the data on the one hand, whilst remaining alert to distortions and manipulation by the respondents on the other.

Wedley's contribution is extremely relevant, dealing as it does with highly subjective, value laden areas inherent in problem solving, decision making processes. This is likened to the study at hand. Industrial relations can be a minefield of conflicting opinion, values, interests and subjective judgements. Determining a hierarchy

of knowledge in such an area is not as simple a matter as in a technical field, where the basic elements necessary for operational effectiveness can be more readily identified. The Delphi technique, used carefully, seems to at least offer a reasonable starting point.

Review Conclusion

Indeed, based on the available literature, it seemed that an application of the Delphi technique offered the most viable means of selecting and justifying content in the context of this study. It provided a solution to the impossibility of conducting needs analyses representative of a wide range of industry in both public and private sectors. It presented a logical means of bringing a group of extremely busy, geographically dispersed experts in the field together, without the dysfunctional aspects of group encounters, not to mention timing difficulties. It overcame the difficulty, if not futility, of conducting in-course assessments and planning modules where reliance is placed upon participants identifying what it is they need to know, when it is recognised that in the context of this study, their existing knowledge base is inadequate. It provided both a focussed means of determining information-based content, and at least a face validation of that content.

CHAPTER 3

The Study Method

An application of the Delphi technique was selected as the most appropriate means, in a study of this kind, of identifying the essential knowledge base to the industrial relations system and its use in structuring an introductory information/awareness based training course for employer and employee representatives.

A qualitative approach to collecting and analysing information was adopted.

It was felt that the use of Delphi was appropriate because -

- (1) It enabled the gathering of expert opinion across the range of industrial relations interests.
- (2) A range of possible subject alternatives could be considered, reviewed and evaluated.
- (3) The reasons respondents gave for their choices could be analysed and their significance understood. Provided that those reasons were sound, justification for the content selected would thus be provided.

- (4) It was anticipated that polling each respondent separately would minimise the adoption of public persona and diminish specious group persuasion.
- (5) It had the potential to provide a locally reliable, valid, relevant and useful training course.
- (6) It may, as the literature indicates, also serve to broaden future support for such a course.

Respondent Population

A nine-member panel with recognised industrial relations experience and expertise, representative of major organisations and interests within the field, was established. Only industrial relations specialists (experts), as opposed to managers or shop stewards (novices) were chosen. This was done for two reasons. The first relates to the nature of the research problem (pp.4-5). This study recognises that workplace players, other than designated industrial relations specialists, lack basic understanding and expertise in the industrial relations area. The second relates to the nature of human information processing. Ericsson and Simon (1984) quote Chase and Ericsson (1982) as stating "experts in their domain of expertise display

spontaneous and immediate recall of similar and relevant information" (p.124). They, that is Ericsson and Simon, go on to quote Bloom and Broode (1954) and Allwood and Montgomery (1981,1982), as saying - "in contrast, novices have difficulty in retrieving or even knowing that they know relevant information" (p.124). Consequently, this study is necessarily based upon the domain appropriate to the experts. It could be noted, however, that some of the respondents have shop floor, line and senior managerial experience.

A brief summary of the respondents' involvement in industrial relations follows.

Respondent One, after fifteen years experience in the Trade Union movement, accepted an appointment to the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission, assuming responsibility for matters concerning the construction industry. The Respondent's previous industrial relations experience included positions as industrial officer with a number of prominent blue-collar unions, as well as Assistant Secretary in one of the State's largest unions and former President of the Trades and Labor Council.

During a fourteen-year involvement in industrial relations, Respondent Two has worked as a research clerk in the W.A. Industrial Relations

Commission, a research officer in the Department of Labour and has had nine years experience as an industrial advocate for the Confederation of W.A. Industry advising and representing employers in many industries on industrial matters. Respondent Two currently holds a managerial position at the Confederation and is Manager of a Traders Association. This panelist has also held office with the Industrial Relations Society of Western Australia.

Respondent Three is currently working in industrial relations in the public sector and is involved with special projects, notably the implementation of the structural efficiency principle. This followed membership of the task force for the implementation of the second tier (re-structuring and efficiency principle). Prior to this, Respondent Three's involvement had been largely in the area of education with curriculum development in T.A.F.E. and the Training and Development Branch of the Department of Employment and Training.

Respondent Four works for the Department of Employment, Education and Training. For seven years this Respondent reported and wrote on industrial relations for a Western Australian daily newspaper. Respondent Four was also a member of the Executive of the W.A. Branch of the Australian Journalists

Association and a member of the A.J.A. Ethics Committee.

Respondent Five has a lengthy involvement with the Trades and Labor Council (T.L.C.), commencing as a delegate for a union with which he held a number of elected positions, including President, Secretary and Federal Councillor. The Respondent's experience was increased with the T.L.C. through being the workers' compensation advocate and then as industrial officer.

Respondent Six has a career spanning twenty-two years in industrial relations, beginning as an industrial officer with the Western Australian Government, then spending fifteen years with the Confederation of Western Australian Industry and its predecessors. As well as being a National Advocate for the Building Construction Industry, the Respondent's other experiences in the industrial relations field are diverse, including study at the Institute of Labour Relations in Geneva, the study of industrial relations in hydrocarbons in the North Sea and the United States of America and advising the Kuwait Government on labour law legislation. Respondent Six also has many years of experience conciliating and arbitrating in industrial relations as a Commissioner of the W.A. Industrial Relations Commission.

Respondent Seven has solid "grass roots" industrial relations experience as a blue-collar union convenor in the Northern Territory. This Respondent held the positions of industrial officer with both professional and mainstream blue-collar unions and is currently actively involved in industrial relations in that capacity.

Over a seventeen-year period Respondent Eight has been a noted participant in industrial relations in Western Australia and has been both an industrial advocate and union official, having held the position of W.A. Branch Secretary of one of the State's largest and most prominent unions for many years.

Respondent Nine is presently an industrial relations consultant to the Minister for Labour, with fifteen years experience in public sector industrial relations, advising, representing and negotiating on behalf of government.

All the Respondents have acknowledged expertise and understanding of industrial relations. They offer differing perspectives representative of various interests across the system. A deliberate decision was made to exclude representatives from formal training institutions. This was done on the basis that such views can be generally known through a perusal of the various industrial relations course

prospectus. Furthermore, it was felt important to remain consistent to the notion of a panel with immediate "hands on" expertise in the practice of industrial relations. Lastly, some panel members do in fact have an involvement in the area of training and development. Whilst it is not reflected in the summaries of their industrial relations experience, many have experience in lecturing on their specialty at secondary, post-secondary and tertiary institutions, seminars, trade union training courses and the like. Thus, in a secondary sense, their experience as training providers may be reflected in their opinions.

Procedures Adopted

Round one. Initially, respondents were contacted by telephone. The purposes of the study were briefly explained, along with the anticipated time commitment. An interview date and time was also fixed. This was followed up with a letter of confirmation (see Appendix 1).

The decision to use an interview as the first round of information getting represents a major modification in Delphi technique. The procedure usually commences with a questionnaire that utilises open-ended questions or statements to elicit responses. However, it was felt that given the high

inference nature of much of the material likely to be offered, it would be useful for the researcher to be able to question initially each respondent face to face to ensure mutual understanding. To this end a progressively structured interview, utilising open-ended questions and discussion was held with each of the respondents. Prior to commencing the interview proper, each respondent was given a summary of the research proposal to read. This outlined the aims of the study, the target population of the intended training course and it included such details as the proposed course type (seminar/workshop) and length (two to three days). As well as providing a standard means of conveying information on the study to the respondents, the summary also served as a useful springboard for discussion and questioning. Examples of the types of questions put to respondents are contained in Appendix 2.

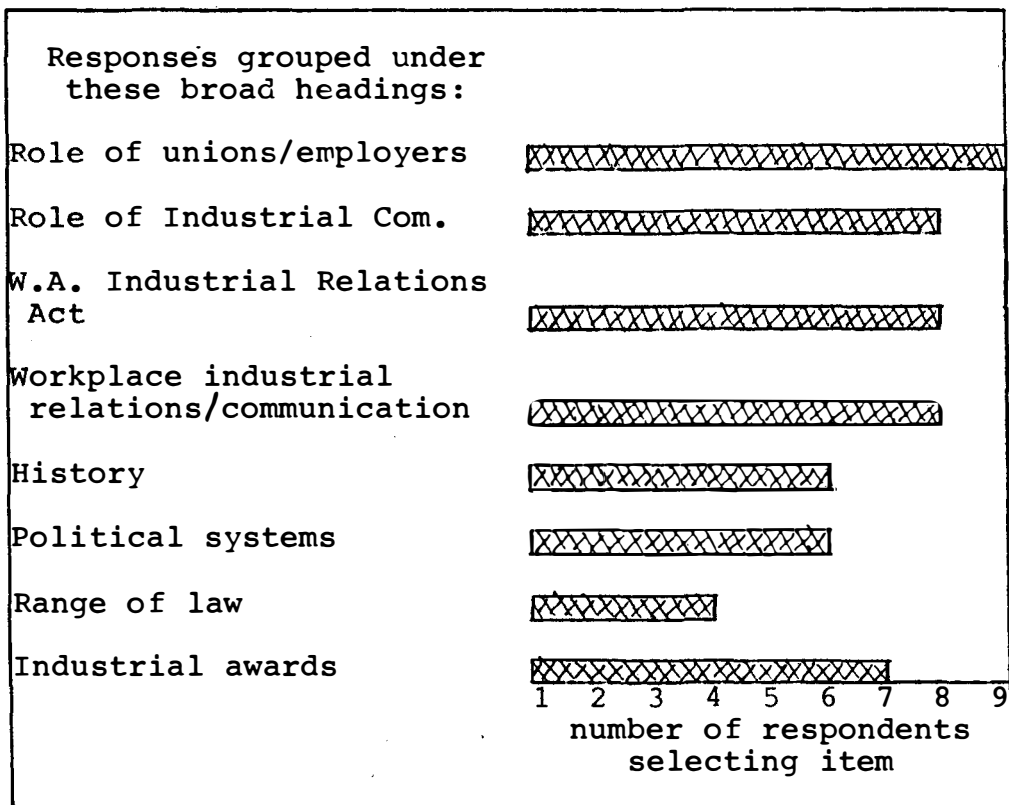
The purpose and goals of the study were discussed at the commencement of each interview. Interviews focussed on each respondent's opinion as to which topics were seen to be crucial in developing basic knowledge and understanding of the industrial relations system. Those views, and the reasons why the respondents held them, were discussed to try and eliminate any areas of misunderstanding. Notes were made during each

interview and a written record of each interview was kept.

From these informal but informative interviews a wealth of material was yielded. It was interesting to note a high degree of cohesion even at this first round stage. Differences in opinion largely related to differing perspectives and emphasis. Every item of suggested content was listed. This list was then edited to remove duplications. Items were then grouped under various headings which were derived from interview responses. This data analysis is reflected in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Summary of Content Selected from Interview Responses Round 1



Round two. This analysis provided the data from which the second round of the Delphi process, a survey using rating scales, was developed. Firstly, the number of headings were reduced to six and items re-grouped accordingly. Whilst no items were deleted, it was logical to group headings such as the role of the Industrial Relations Commission, the Western Australian Industrial Relations Act, industrial awards and the range of law all under the one heading of Overview of the Formal System. Many of the items under each of those separate headings overlapped and all fell well within the scope of the formal system. By contrast, the items listed under workplace industrial relations and communications differed markedly, so this heading was split into two distinct (albeit related) groupings. Six major groupings, being historical overview, overview of political systems, overview of the formal industrial relations system, role of trade unions and employers, industrial relations in the workplace and communications, and their sub-items, constituted the respondent selections on the survey form.

Secondly, the notes taken at each interview were scrutinised and reasons given by respondents for nominating the various content areas were reproduced under the relevant content headings in the survey. A degree of editorial licence was used to reflect respondents' views in a suitable format. Every care was taken not to distort those views in

this process. Whilst some reasons appeared repetitive they were nevertheless retained because of their high inference nature. It was felt more appropriate to allow the respondents to make judgements on the retention of such reasons.

Respondents were asked to rate each item of content on a significance scale of one to five, ranging from none to extreme. Significance related to the item's importance in providing knowledge fundamental to the industrial relations system. The course's target population was again identified and included with the instructions for completing the survey. Respondents were also asked to rate their level of agreement with the reasons for each major topic's inclusion on a scale of one to four, ranging from disagree to high agreement. Table 2 contains a sample from the survey. Space was provided at the end of the survey to make further suggestions or comments.

Before mailing the survey to respondents, it was tested on a number of industrial officer colleagues. In this way the form of the survey was checked for over-all clarity and errors and misunderstandings were eliminated. Such changes were minor, relating to drafting or spelling mistakes rather than significant structural or conceptual errors.

Table 2

Sample Items from Survey 1, Round 2

Respondents' selections:

Significance

Historical Overview

1 2 3 4 5
none extreme

the 1890's strikes

1 2 3 4 5
none extreme

emergence of the A.L.P.

1 2 3 4 5
none extreme

the Constitution

1 2 3 4 5
none extreme

creation of the arbitration system

1 2 3 4 5
none extreme

evolution of current wages system

1 2 3 4 5
none extreme

effects of history and tradition

1 2 3 4 5
none extreme

society's changing perspectives

1 2 3 4 5
none extreme

contemporary developments

1 2 3 4 5
none extreme

the 38-hour week

1 2 3 4 5
none extreme

National & State Wage Cases 1987-93

1 2 3 4 5
none extreme

Respondents' reasons for inclusion:

An overview of history provides an appreciation of the lines of cleavage which have occurred.

1 2 3 4
disagree low medium high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

Necessary for people to gain an appreciation of the significance of the changes which have occurred.

1 2 3 4
disagree low medium high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

Necessary so that people can understand what is happening now and why.

1 2 3 4
disagree low medium high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

Wages policy is one of the most important matters of social interest in our community - therefore there is a need to understand the historical and social context of the industrial relations system.

1 2 3 4
disagree low medium high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

The survey was accompanied by a covering letter and a reply paid envelope. As part of this second round, respondents were also asked to provide details of their industrial relations experience to establish the study's prima facie credibility.

The complete survey, including the covering letter and instructions, can be found at Appendix 3.

In analysing the responses to Survey One, a qualitative focus was maintained, although some quantitative analysis was undertaken. A record was made of the panelists' score for each item. For example, the item 'evolution of the current wages system' under Historical Overview recorded a score of 4, 4, 5, 4, 4, 4, 2, 4, 4. Content selections rated by a majority (five or more) of panelists at three or below were deleted from further consideration. This was based on the belief that if a majority of expert opinion held that an item of content was of moderate or less than moderate significance, it was outside the scope of a course seeking to present essential, relevant information to the target workplace population. Similarly, all reasons with a majority rating of two or below were discarded.

This served as a preliminary means of culling all items with moderate or less significance, and reasons with only low levels of agreement. It remained, as suggested by Wedley (1980) to further

cancel the items for round three, so that those with the lowest rankings could be discarded from further consideration.

Given the novice nature of the target population, the requirement for content to be fundamental to an understanding of industrial relations, and to a lesser extent consideration of practical constraints such as the time (two to three days) allotted to the proposed course, it was decided that any item retained should approach a rating of very significant (i.e. 4 on the scale of 1 - 5). Thus it was deemed that any item with a mean score of 3.66, in other words an over-all score closer to very, rather than moderately significant, should be retained. In terms of a qualitative assessment this was both conservative and appropriate. In quantitative terms, it ensured that any items scoring in the range of moderately to very significant would be retained, provided that the bulk (two-thirds) of the respondents considered the topic to be very significant. This is consistent with Lawshe's (1975) content validity ratio approach, as reported by Ford and Wroten (1982), where content was deemed to have a greater degree of validity if more than half the subject matter experts saw the item as important. The mean score of the remaining items was then calculated.

However, 3.66 was not the only filter applied. Because the validity of the selection process was dependent upon expert opinion, it would have been unsound to rely solely upon a statistical determinant. For example, an item rated by two-thirds of the respondents as very significant, and one-third as of marginal or no significance, would have scored less than 3.66. To reject the item would have been to ignore the opinion of two-thirds of respondent expert opinion, and so ignore valid subject matter. Therefore, in such cases minority opinion was disregarded and the item retained.

Following similar reasoning, respondents' reasons for including content were retained where the mean rating was 3.11 on a scale of one (disagree) to four (high agreement). Thus in order for a reason to be retained respondents had to indicate that they were somewhat more than moderately agreeable.

This study did not place heavy reliance upon a descriptive statistical analysis. With a respondent population of nine, it was possible to adopt a purely qualitative approach to data analysis. The mean was used as an aid to censoring items. To mitigate against statistical manipulation or abuse leading to error, respondents were invited to reintroduce censored items in round three.

Further, the mean was employed as a consistent method of indicating central tendency to the respondents. Taking the significance scale as an example, all items with a majority rating of moderate or less significance (i.e. 3 or less) were deleted. The method of discarding majority low scores meant that a calculation of the median, recognised as the correct measure in statistical terms, almost always resulted in a figure of four or five. This would have had almost no meaningful value in terms of feedback to respondents. According to Wedley (1980), "some measure of central tendency" (p.4) should be used in analysing data as part of the feedback in the third round. He continues, saying that very frequently the mean is used, because it is easier to calculate and manipulate in computer programmes (Wedley, 1980, p.4). In this study, it was felt that the mean was a more useful measure of central tendency - low scoring items had been discarded and in this situation it was not going to be markedly distorted by extreme scores. Thus the mean could provide respondents with an indication of variation in group response to each item. A reliable, consistent indicator was required not because of its statistical significance per se, but as an accessing signal to respondents which might stimulate additional information.

As statistical analysis was not a significant factor, the mean ratings of all items are not reproduced in the study. Further, as the purpose of the study was to identify content items which expert opinion believed important, it would seem futile to table ratings for discarded (i.e. insignificant) items. However the mean ratings of all items retained from round two can be found at Appendix 4 - Survey 2, Round Three. Table 3 contains a summary of the mean significance ratings for the major topic headings. A high degree of cohesion was indicated in the responses with all but one major topic receiving an average rating from very to extremely significant.

Table 3

Mean Significance Ratings of Major Topics
Survey 1, Round 2

<u>Major Topic</u>	<u>Mean Score</u> (1-5)
Historical Overview	4.
Overview of Political Systems	3.22
Overview of Formal Industrial Relations System	4.
Role of Trade Unions and Employers	4.66
Industrial Relations in the Workplace	4.77
Communications	4.33

Round three. A second survey was developed using the results of Survey One as a basis. Survey Two appears as Appendix 4.

All the major topics were retained except for the overview of political systems. As a major heading it had failed to score either the required mean or a two-thirds majority rating of very significant. Not surprisingly, of the thirteen content items listed under this topic only two met the retention criteria. These were the A.L.P./A.C.T.U. social compact alliance, and government as an economic manager. Therefore, a new heading, that of contemporary political climate, was created for these two items.

The format of Survey Two differed slightly to that of Survey One (see Table 4 for an example from Survey Two). The retained content items and reasons were reported back to the respondents, along with their mean significance and agreement ratings. Respondents were asked to further consider the selections and reasons and rate each one accordingly on the significance and agreement scales provided.

Table 4

Sample Items from Survey 2, Round 3

<u>Respondents' selections:</u>		<u>Significance Rating 1 - 5</u>	
		<u>Mean score previous round</u>	<u>Your new rating</u>
(6)	(a) <u>Communications</u>	<u>4.3</u>	<input type="text"/>
	effective communication	<u>4.4</u>	<input type="text"/>
	sharing information	<u>4.2</u>	<input type="text"/>
	disseminating information	<u>4.1</u>	<input type="text"/>
	available information resources	<u>3.9</u>	<input type="text"/>
<u>Comments:</u>			
(6)	(b) <u>Respondents' reasons:</u>	<u>Agreement Rating 1 - 4</u>	
		<u>mean score</u>	<u>new rating</u>
	Fundamental to the broad system of I.R. is the dissemination of inform- ation about what is happening	<u>3.2</u>	<input type="text"/>
	The resolution of disputes does not occur in a vacuum - people need to understand what is going on in order to make appropriate decisions	<u>3.6</u>	<input type="text"/>
	The changing nature of industrial relations means that people need to know the various resources and information available to them	<u>3.3</u>	<input type="text"/>
<u>Comments:</u>			
(6)	(c) <u>New Suggestion from Survey 1 -</u>		
	Communication and reaction in a crisis situation - e.g. a brief look at aspects such as "buck passing" and "scape goating".		
	Significance		
	1 2 3 4 5		
	none marginal moderate very extreme		
<u>Comments:</u>			
Reason: Recognising the negative aspects of communication may assist workplace participants to either avoid or remedy the situation.			
Level of Agreement			
1 2 3 4			
disagree low medium sign			
<u>Comments:</u>			

Where a re-rating differed substantially from the mean, respondents were asked to briefly write down their reasoning to enable divergent views to be analysed. Wedley (1980, p.6) points out that a person with divergent views may have a more correct evaluation of an item's benefit and that such comments can be used to shift the panel's opinion or influence the eventual decision maker.

Respondents were also invited to reinstate content choices or reasons if they felt strongly about the deletion. If, in analysing the feedback, new ideas were forthcoming, respondents were asked to include these. To this end, space for comments was left at the end of each major topic heading and each grouping of reasons for inclusion. It was felt appropriate to invite additional comment at this stage, after the original data had been pared down. These comments aided further analysis and decision making and avoided the possibility of receiving irrelevant information on subsequently eliminated items. An addendum area was once again placed at the end of the survey for any additional comments which respondents may have wished to include.

Three new content suggestions and reasons from Survey One were also incorporated in Survey Two under the appropriate topic headings - overview of the formal system, industrial relations in the workplace and communications. A rating format

identical to that of Survey One was used for these new inclusions.

Survey Two included two open ended statements which respondents were asked to complete as briefly as possible. The statements were intended to provide a summary of each respondent's thinking in terms of content essentials and reasons for choice. These statements were then checked against the information gained from the rated responses. This provided some means of assessing whether the items listed in the survey accurately reflected respondents' views, and whether the responses to the survey were a reliable indication of what the panelists really thought.

Instructions accompanying Survey Two were again included in a covering letter. It was felt necessary to once more remind respondents that the primary concern of the proposed content was to convey information which people in the workplace need in order to understand "industrial relations" and how the system affects them. They were further reminded that the aim was not to develop skills and attitudes necessary for sound industrial relations practice as this was beyond the scope of an introductory information-based course. A reminder of the target population was also given.

At the end of this round the group mean was again calculated for each item. A comparison of the mean scores between Surveys One and Two showed little change as is exemplified in the comparison of major topics (see Table 5).

Table 5

Mean Significance Ratings of Major Topics -
Comparison of Survey 1 and 2 Results

<u>Major Topic</u>	<u>Mean Score (1-5)</u>	
	Survey 1	Survey 2
Historical Overview	4.	4.
Overview of Political Systems (a)	3.22	-
Contemporary Political Climate	-	3.33
Overview of Formal Industrial Relations System	4.	4.11
Role of Trade Unions and Employers	4.66	4.5
Industrial Relations in the Workplace	4.77	4.75
Communications	4.33	4.61

(a) This topic was eliminated from Survey 2. However, two sub-items were retained in the second survey under a new topic heading of contemporary political climate.

Construction of Course Outline

Using the outcomes from Survey Two, that is the rated items, the responses to the open ended statements and the respondents' comments, a course outline was prepared. The same criteria was used to eliminate items with less than an average 3.66 significance rating or an average 3.11 agreement rating, except where a two-thirds majority of respondents rated an item as being very to extremely significant. In this case content was retained. Respondents' intentions were more accurately reflected by expanding some content items and reasons for inclusion. In doing this earlier survey material was drawn upon, and dissenting or elaborative comment utilised. It should be noted that this aspect of the project was not significant. In the main, majority respondent opinion was the guide and determinant.

The study results (course outline) and discussion were given to respondents for their comment prior to finalisation of the research report. Draft copies of the report in full were also made available. This did not result in the need for any additional surveying due to respondent comment and no changes in respondent viewpoint were reported.

Summary

Round One, a progressively structured interview conducted with each respondent separately, supplied all the basic data from which content selections were made and the reasons justifying the selections given. Round Two, a lengthy survey, was used to refine the respondents' suggestions and opinions through rating content items for significance; and reasons given, for level of agreement. Additional suggestions were also sought in Round Two.

In Round Three, having eliminated all low scoring items, a second survey gave respondents the opportunity to see what the group choices were in terms of mean scores and to reject or verify those choices. Respondents were also able to re-include discarded items, add new suggestions, and comment on their choices. Thus the refining process in terms of the Delphi technique was completed. A course outline, incorporating the respondents' suggestions and opinions, was then developed and distributed to respondents with an invitation to make final adjustments and/or comment.

CHAPTER 4

The Study Results

Having applied a modified Delphi technique, utilising three investigative rounds, to determine expert opinion on appropriate content for an introductory training course in industrial relations and the reasons for so selecting, the following course outline was adopted.

Selected Content and its Justification

1. Historical Overview

- (i) Sketch of the evolution of the wages system from the 1890's
- (ii) Contemporary developments e.g.
A.L.P./A.C.T.U. social compact alliance,
current economic climate
- (iii) National/State wage cases 1987-1989.

Justification

- (i) Necessary for an appreciation of the changes to the system which have occurred

- (ii) Necessary for an understanding of what is happening now and why
- (iii) Provides a basic understanding of the concepts which underpin the system
- (iv) Wages policy is an important matter of social interest in our community; there is a need to understand the historical/social context of the industrial relations system
- (v) An awareness of the political and economic climate aids in understanding and interpreting what is currently happening in industrial relations.

2. Overview of the Formal Industrial Relations System

- (i) Purposes of the Western Australian Industrial Relations Act and the Industrial Relations Commission
- (ii) Goodwill and discussion as a basis for the system
- (iii) Status, use and interpretation of industrial awards

Justification

- (i) Those wishing to use the current system have to know what that system is and why it came to be what it is
- (ii) A knowledge of both the opportunities offered and the constraints of the formal system assists workplace participants to form more realistic expectations
- (iii) Without industrial awards, or their prescription as a minimum enforceable entitlement, the formal system would not exist.

3. Role of Trade Unions and Employers

The role of unions -

- (i) Union structure - workplace to peak council
- (ii) Goals
- (iii) Rights and obligations
- (iv) Relationship between union representatives and their constituents

(v) Roles of union officials

(vi) Role of workplace representatives.

Role of the employer -

(i) Organisational structure and goals

(ii) Employer obligations

(iii) Relating to the workforce.

Justification

(i) Basic to an understanding of the system is an understanding of the actors in the system and their roles

(ii) Helps people understand why players adopt a particular attitude or approach.

4. Industrial Relations in the Workplace

(i) Direct settlement of industrial matters in the workplace

(ii) The effect of current wages policy

(iii) Workplace specific issues, e.g.
restructuring, health and safety, English
on the job

(iv) Trust

(v) Win - win bargaining.

Justification

- (i) There is a need to appreciate the difference between theoretical constructs and practical realities
- (ii) An understanding of industrial relations as it operates in the workplace should enable people to not unduly restrict their activities, whilst nevertheless recognising that there is a framework (the formal system) to which they must conform
- (iii) There is growing recognition that people who work together ought to be able to resolve their own problems
- (iv) People tend to focus upon the immediate needs of their own situation and workplace, with their own problems and needs being paramount.

5. Communications

- (i) Effective communication
- (ii) Sharing information
- (iii) Disseminating information
- (iv) Workplace communication channels
- (v) Consultation and participation
- (vi) Communication processes from the serving
of a claim, its negotiation, arbitration
and enforcement
- (vii) Available information resources.

Justification

- (i) Fundamental to the broad system of
industrial relations is the dissemination
of information about what is happening
- (ii) The resolution of disputes does not occur
in a vacuum - people need to understand
what is going on in order to make
appropriate decisions

- (iii) It is critical that people understand how things are going to affect them because their "rights" (to work, strike, hire, fire etc.) are involved
- (iv) Communication emphasises basic democratic principles - it promotes understanding and acceptance that the status of employees is other than a piece of machinery
- (v) Communication sets up a workplace framework to deal with conflict and breakdown in industrial relations
- (vi) Information cannot be locked into management if industrial disputation, misunderstandings and conflict are to be avoided
- (vii) The changing nature of industrial relations means people need to know the various resources available to them so that information can be acquired quickly.

These results, that is the content selected and the justification for those selections, were based entirely on expert opinion gathered during the three rounds of the Delphi process. In short, the outline presented represents the distillation of expert industrial relations opinion in regard to essential basic industrial relations information.

CHAPTER 5

Study Discussion

Discussion of Results

It is suggested that the study results are referred to whilst reading this section of the report. Each section of the course outline is discussed. The reasons for selecting the various areas of content are largely self explanatory, being reproduced as closely as possible to the original form suggested by the respondents. Therefore the justification for the inclusion of each section of content is not the subject of separate discussion. Rather, the reader is invited to apply Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis (1976, p.43) common sense "shock of recognition" test.

A qualitative examination of respondents' views at the conclusion of the three Delphi rounds revealed the following:-

Historical Overview. It was clear that the respondents' aim was to provide a brief historical perspective on the development of the centralised system of industrial relations. It was seen as important that such an historical analysis provide a rationale for the current system when compared with earlier alternatives, whilst leaving participants

free to judge the appropriateness of today's system for themselves. Tradition should not be allowed to predominate so as to inhibit - rather participants should be enabled to understand their current position from an historical perspective.

Over-all the rankings for this area remained stable. Items such as the 1890's strikes and the creation of the arbitration system declined somewhat. However, it seems a reasonable proposition that in covering an item such as the evolution of the current wages system, the relevant events of the 1890's and the setting up of the arbitration system would be touched on. The decline in rating may be interpreted as respondents not wishing to burden course participants with superfluous detail, given the role in the workplace of the target population, the introductory nature of the course and its time constraints.

Ratings on reasons improved slightly. Again, this could be seen to confirm views that the area must be included but not in great depth or detail.

Contemporary political climate. Rankings for content items under this heading were not sufficient to warrant their inclusion under a major heading. However there was a high level of agreement on the need for such political and economic awareness in order to facilitate understanding and interpretation

of current industrial relations on the macro scale. Therefore, it seemed logical to include a reference to such items under contemporary developments in the historical overview. It could be argued that reference to the national economy and the A.L.P./A.C.T.U. social compact alliance provides background information which is vital to a proper appreciation of the current emphasis on restructuring industry, as well as providing an explanation of the reasoning behind recent changes to the system when compared with earlier approaches. The emphasis again was on providing an awareness, to give course participants some background, and not detailed information.

Overview of the formal system. Similarly, respondents indicated that an understanding of the formal system was essential, but it should be by way of an overview. Specifics and technical detail of no real relevance or use to workplace participants was to be avoided. Rather, the emphasis was to be upon the broad concepts underpinning the system and the uses of the system. Participants needed an awareness that the system has to be manipulated to advantage - the system does not "do" it on its own. Respondent comment also pointed out that unless participants are prepared to look at the resolution of industrial problems in creative, alternative ways then the formal system can work as a barrier to desirable change. This kind of understanding

becomes important to any discussion of workplace industrial relations. In the Western Australian jurisdiction the definition of "industrial matter" is broad. Participants need to understand that the system is there to be used for the benefit of the players and ought not be allowed to inhibit legitimate improvements. At the same time they must grasp that there are rules to which players must adhere - and use to effect.

It was interesting to note that there were two dissenting views on the inclusion of "goodwill and discussion" as a content items under this heading. This was based on the view that goodwill and discussion have little place in the formal adversarial system. However all other panelists rated the item as very significant, apparently accepting this as a keystone of the system, in terms of conciliation and as a basis for participation (given that the coercive powers of the system are not great).

Role of trade unions and employers. This content area scored consistently from round to round with agreement for the reasons for its inclusion increasing in ratings. There were two exceptions, with the selections "organisational structure" and "employer rights" receiving reduced ratings which caused them to fall below the cut off point. A decision was made to retain the former item and

expand it to become "organisational structure and goals". Possibly owing to the predominance of Taylorist or Fordist modes of work organisation (Matthews, 1989), many workplace representatives do not seem to have an over-all understanding of the purposes of the employer's business. Earlier discussions with panelists indicated that such a lack of knowledge adds to misunderstandings which can result in industrial disputation. Therefore, an appreciation of what the employer organisation is about and how it operates should facilitate a realistic shop floor approach to industrial relations, thus diminishing the likelihood of industrial disputes.

Respondent comment that employer rights were earned, flowing from good practice and relationships and not inherited or given by statute, was accepted. Interestingly, such comment did not come from panelists representing employee interests. It may be that such views reflect a contemporary approach of co-operation and collaboration in employee relations. On the other hand, a daily feature of the formal system is employers seeking, for example, to uphold their common law rights to terminate employment contracts. However, the majority decision of the respondents to reject the item was adhered to.

From the ratings it was clear that respondents felt a sound knowledge of the players was essential - particularly the roles of workplace union representatives. As there is a need to understand the formal system in order to use it to better industrial relations, so there is a need to understand the roles of the players. They then can be "used" to good effect in improving industrial relations.

Industrial relations in the workplace.

Consistency of scoring from round to round was again a feature of this area. Over-all ratings on items and reasons for inclusion improved marginally.

A possible difficulty with the content selections that survived to round three under this heading was that none specifically related to the first reason for including the area. This reason focused on the need to appreciate the distinction between theoretical constructs and practical realities. Thus, there would seem to be a need to acknowledge the power/political relationships in the workplace. Industrial relations niceties avail little when people genuinely believe that their interests or rights are threatened. Many union officials and employers have found (to their cost) that the "troops on the ground" care little, for example, for the dictates of wage fixing principles or good industrial relations practice - i.e. the

practical realities and the theoretical constructs do not always merge. That aspect would appear to require some sensitive, down to earth exploration. In an effort to achieve this the content item "collective bargaining" was deleted and replaced with "direct settlement of industrial matters in the workplace". This would seem to more correctly reflect respondents' views. Further, collective bargaining as such is not always understood to be part of our compulsory arbitration system.

As was appropriate, given the target group for the proposed course, this section scored highest over-all in terms of its significance to an introduction to industrial relations. It is an area where participants can utilise their own on-the-job experiences in order to learn and develop their awareness of the issues raised. It also relates back to the earlier course section on roles, developing a firm understanding of the union as an alternative power base for employees in the workplace to initiate or oppose changes in employment.

Communications. Once again, ratings for this section were consistent with some improvement, especially in levels of agreement. Respondents rate this area as being close to extremely significant and next in importance to an understanding of

industrial relations in the workplace. The strength of identification of this area as essential from round one (eight respondents suggested it as a major topic) to round three was surprising, in that it could be thought of as pertaining more to skills than information. However, the items selected by the panel relate largely to information about communication and its importance. Respondents emphasised the need for participants to know their way around communication and information networks, in order to both access information quickly in a rapidly changing environment and to avoid large amounts of irrelevant information. Certainly there could be little argument against the proposition that communication is fundamental to industrial relations.

Round three summary section. Responses to this section largely verified the major areas panelists had previously chosen. This was to be expected, if the high levels of convergence shown throughout the study were truly representative of the panel's views.

As the study progressed, it became increasingly evident that the respondents' approach to industrial relations encompassed human relations in the workplace rather than focusing mainly upon rules, procedures and regulations within the formal system. Panelists' summaries reinforced this with

acknowledgement of the human element ever present in negotiation, decision making and such in the workplace. This calls for sensitive, aware handling of content such as the roles of the players, workplace industrial relations and communications. It was clear that these make up the nub of the course with the overview of historical development and the formal system providing a contextual framework. From such a perspective grows an appreciation of the importance of communication and consultation. As a respondent indicated, this is fundamental to the resolution of industrial relations problems whilst simultaneously ameliorating the potential for the parties to damage one another in the process.

No new content areas were offered by respondents in the summary section. In fact, the new suggestions put forward from round two were rejected in round three as being beyond the scope of an introductory course or in the category of "could know" rather than "must know".

However, one of those suggestions, under the heading of industrial relations in the workplace, may lend itself to both a learning and evaluative strategy. The suggestion was to examine alternative future industrial relations systems based upon what "we", the W.A. stakeholders, would most like to see. This was rejected by majority rating, with the

view being expressed that it was something that could be examined in a subsequent course. Such aims may be more readily identified and achieved if workplace players have an informed approach to utilising and extending the parameters of the system, rather than by relying on what could perhaps be described as blissful ignorance. This would seem to be upheld by respondents' views that lack of knowledge leads to ill conceived and irrational disputes.

By using the suggestion as the basis for group discussion and exploration in a final session to the course it could prove a valuable participative learning and problem solving experience. It could also be used for evaluative purposes, providing a means for gaining insight into what participants have learned about how they fit into the micro and macro industrial relations arena and the effect of this upon their activities.

The round three summaries offered, in brief, a number of ways of presenting the course content. In the main they could be described as variations on a theme, with substantial accord with the outline as presented in the surveys. Using this information, a possible course structure is offered.

Content Structure

In order to place the broad industrial relations system in perspective for workplace participants (industrial relations novices) it is suggested that the content be structured along the following lines:-

The industrial relations system - how it came to be (brief historical development); what it is (contemporary developments) and why it is (rationale for the current system).

How the formal system operates - brief overview of the Western Australian Industrial Relations Act, Commission and related matters.

The players and their roles - the roles of workplace participants are emphasised and placed in the context of the wider roles of trade unions and employers, and the formal system (as above).

How workplace participants influence and participate in the system - an examination of industrial relations in the workplace.

Communications - acquiring, sharing and utilising information at a workplace level; a key to successful industrial relations.

Contemporary Context

Again, a reminder is given that the foregoing constitutes a very basic content structure which serves as a guide to the type of information which might be included in an introductory training course. Depth and manner of presentation would be largely dictated by the learning needs of particular course participants and the time available for the course. That is to say the trainer has the responsibility or the opportunity of adapting this structure to meet the requirements of a given situation.

Further, the content is structured to provide information. It is not a skills-based programme. It is suggested, however, that such a structure could provide a suitable foundation upon which to build later courses aimed at skills development for workplace industrial relations participants.

The results of this study confirm Weaver's (1988) assertion that trainers can use the Delphi technique to gain expert recommendation concerning content for relevant and timely training courses. His view that such content provides a reliable and valid basis for building a training programme is endorsed.

Having constructed a basic course outline as a result of this study, there is no impediment to further development. For example, in an organisational setting, content could be varied or supplemented to incorporate findings from a diagnostic appraisal such as that advocated by Smith and Leary (1978), or a consultative process as utilised by Temporal and Baxter (1981). A learning circle or circles (Scriven, 1984), could utilise the content selected in this study to refine the identification of a knowledge deficit perceived by the group, then use or adapt the content accordingly for their training programme. There is no reason why the course outline could not be modified to include a pre or in-course planning module such as envisaged by Davies (1981). In other words, by using the basic content structure determined by this study, the dysfunctional aspects of participative approaches, with novices, to content selection are overcome. It is then possible to direct the basic content to industry or enterprise specific needs, which could be determined through a participative, collaborative approach. The advantage of this is that it enables the trainer to model the requirements of the structural efficiency principle at the same time as being on sound educational ground. Similarly, the content can be used in a varied or flexible manner in response to a training needs analysis.

Ford and Wroten's (1982) approach, in the context of this study, adds weight to the use of expert opinion to establish valid content, as does the literature reviewed on the Delphi technique.

In turn, the study adds confirmation to Chase and Ericsson's (1982) finding that experts in their field provide similar and relevant information, as reported by Ericsson and Simon (1984). The high level of consensus throughout the study underlined that.

As Gordon (1974) pointed out, establishing consensus may not be the same as establishing worth - except when gathering information on priorities or values. This study required respondents to state the areas of industrial relations information of most importance to novices, and then prioritise their selections. Thus in the highly complex area of industrial relations, the expertness of group opinion and the aggregating and refining technique used, can be said to determine the worth of the study.

The Use of the Delphi Technique in Developing a Training Course

A number of observations regarding the use of the Delphi technique can be made.

The lack of rigid prescription with regard to the Delphi technique affords the researcher a great deal of flexibility to adapt the method to suit the needs of the study at hand. Provided that the tenets of qualitative research are adhered to, procedure can be modified to prevent or address problems and difficulties as they present throughout the study.

In this study the panel of respondents was limited to nine industrial relations experts. It was felt that this number was appropriate to the project, as it was sufficient to cover all main areas of interest in the industrial relations field. It also prevented difficulties which can arise when too much information is generated. A careful selection of respondents can reduce the need for large sampling, depending on the nature and purposes of the study. It also ensures that all respondents are committed to the project and will remain involved until completion. This is another advantage of using a Delphi process.

Opinion was highly convergent from the beginning of this study. The procedure itself doubtless contributes to that with the deletion of all low scoring items and possibly the influence of the group mean, although it is suggested that in this context this would not be a significant feature. Rather, the manipulative aspects of the

process, where much variation in emphasis, perspective and so on is lost in reducing information to single items on a survey, are of concern. However this is not a problem confined to the Delphi technique. The concomitant restriction of choice and high inference risks are likely to be present in any survey process used in a similar situation.

Having said that, the high degree of consensus achieved in this study in the area of communications can be pointed out. This was possibly the content grouping most open to different inference and interpretation. Yet it consistently received highly cohesive ratings. The problem of the various interpretations which respondents may place upon high inference items does not seem to be addressed in the literature. Basically the pitfalls are simply acknowledged and reliance is placed on the discretion of the researcher/administrator in this regard. Mitigating features of the Delphi procedure adopted in this study were the ability to re-survey and call for additional, explanatory or dissenting comment, the provision of reasons for selecting content, the expert nature of the panel and reliance on the integrity of their responses.

Thus, the Delphi technique in this application proved to be a means of refining opinion. Given the diverse range of interests represented, and the high

level of convergence, it can be tentatively claimed that the process is as objective as possible.

In this particular study some degree of interpretation, decision making and editing occurred throughout, consistent with Wedley's (1980) approach in using Delphi as an aid to decision making. It would appear that where Delphi is used to determine content in a non-technical or value-laden field, such activity on the part of the researcher is inevitable. It may be that difficulties could arise in utilising Delphi in such areas where the survey co-ordinator is unfamiliar with the field, and therefore disadvantaged in the exercising, of editorial responsibility. On the other hand, it may be possible to design surveys or continue the iterative process so that to some extent the need for such intervention is obviated.

A problem encountered in using the Delphi technique was the time constraints faced by the respondents. Some weeks had to be allowed for the completion of each round. This difficulty needs to be balanced against the improbability of getting such a group of experts together in any other forum. The practical problems of finding common available times as well as the dysfunctional aspects of group work would jeopardise the successful outcome of other approaches to gaining group opinion.

Initial plans to conduct a fourth round evaluative survey were abandoned. It was felt that conducting a fourth round would impose on the respondents, especially as by the end of the third round their views were clearly known. The reasons for selecting content, plus additional respondent comment indicated not only the significance of items, but also their relevance, practical usefulness and validity for workplace participants, rendering the evaluative survey somewhat superfluous. However, would be users of a Delphi technique to select content should be aware that it is not suitable for those needing to produce a course outline quickly. It is time consuming for all concerned and there needs to be a degree of time tolerance to cater for respondents who cannot meet survey deadlines because of other commitments.

In terms of information yielded and direction given, the process seems to be extremely effective for a researcher who is also going to implement the course. There is a wealth of information upon which to draw, with many shades and depths of meaning as well as the differing emphasis which arises from the respondents' varying perspectives on industrial relations. Anyone else wishing to run the course is deprived of those particular benefits. In that case, the application of the Delphi technique to determining and justifying course content has identified, with a high degree of consensus, the

major areas in which workplace participants require information at an introductory level to industrial relations and why.

It must be emphasised again that the content outline is a starting point. The information gained is limited to what the particular group of experts respondent to this survey believe is relevant to the Western Australian situation and it ought not to be interpreted without that qualification. Further, it is reasonable to assume that the course would require modification following an evaluation of its application in practice. The ultimate test of its veracity and appropriateness would be in its effectiveness on application. Any implementor should be prepared to evaluate and modify the content in accordance with learners' identified needs.

There is much more that could be said about the Delphi technique. It is an extremely interesting process, particularly in terms of its mutually educative value. It is a means of fast tracking shared insights to give global perspective that otherwise might take years to develop or blunder across. But further comment would be inappropriate given that the purpose of the study was not to investigate the Delphi procedure as such; and this adaptation was individual and for a very specific and narrow purpose.

However, provided that a trainer has access to expert opinion and the available time to use this process for course development, the technique is to be recommended.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

The Process

From the beginning of this project it was apparent that there was a good deal of common understanding amongst the industrial relations specialists involved. It was also clear that within that were many shades of meaning and interpretation. The application of the Delphi technique thus became essentially a process for refining and focusing opinion so as to identify the fundamentals of the industrial relations system, in order to provide an introductory training course for non-specialist (novice) participants in industrial relations at the workplace. The justification for those choices was provided by the respondents in the form of reasons for their decisions.

Because much of the course material is of a high inference nature and so open to interpretation, a potential user ought not to be deterred. In this the proposed course is no different from any other curriculum area involving values and judgements. A great deal of interpretation regarding the course outline falls to the educator and the learner. Providing that the individual's learning needs become the ultimate decider of how and what content

is presented, the fact that different interpretations and understandings may arise does not provide a reason to abandon the educative effort before it begins.

The Outcomes

This report recognises and endorses the view that group opinions are of more value than individual ones (Gordon, 1974 and Wedley, 1980). As expert group opinion determined the final product (content selections) the outcomes can be said to be relevant and significant.

Clearly, the study respondents did not select and justify content on the basis of a narrow perception of industrial relations, involving only aspects of the formal system. All adopted a much broader view which included human relations in the work environment. This was in keeping with the contemporary industrial relations climate, at least at theoretical level and hopefully increasingly in practice.

For those wishing to gain a "state of art" perspective (referred to by Weaver (1988) as an advantage in using a Delphi method) on industrial relations at a basic level, the results of this study provide interesting reading. The study

yielded a comprehensive listing of subject matter, categorised under major headings.

In selecting content, respondents maintained a workplace perspective. Content focuses on providing novices with information and understanding about how they fit into the system and what can and can not be achieved. It acknowledges, as a respondent pointed out, that our system is geared to a more formal level and does not readily explain itself to those who are not the main players. The wider contextual background was provided without emphasis upon unnecessary detail. Thus a major aim of the study was thereby satisfied. This was to supply introductory information on the fundamentals of the industrial relations system, and its impact on workplace decisions.

A second, major aim of the study was also realised - content offered is capable of adaptation and utilisation across a wide diversity of industry, from public sector service industries to private enterprise mining and manufacturing. This is so if the reasons for including content are examined and understood, the workplace focus maintained, and accepted principles of adult education adhered to.

The manner in which the content can be utilised is varied and flexible. The content selections derived from this application of the Delphi

technique can be offered as is. Or, these selections can be augmented, following either an industry or enterprise specific training needs analysis or participative selection methods, as outlined in the study's literature review (pp.13-32). Further, by concentrating on workplace or industry specific issues, course participants' own experiences can be utilised and directed in a learning to learn mode, and so much of the information pertaining to the wider industrial relations system reinforced.

The content outcomes of this study can not be said to reflect either employer or labour movement bias, given the composition of the respondent population and the method of content selection used. In this, the third aim of the study, to develop content suitable for both union and management representatives, can be seen to be satisfied. The content selected reflects the non-partisan nature of the selection process. At the same time, the process itself provides a model of a participative, co-operative approach to content selection. As such, it is ideally suited to be offered to the industrial parties jointly. Alternatively, the same subject matter could be offered to either party separately - there is nothing to offend either, concentrating as it does fairly, on the basic facts.

Workplace Applications

The study's most likely and appropriate utilisation is that for which it was intended, providing a short, basic industrial relations training course. As Western Australia proceeds further with micro economic reform under the Structural Efficiency Principle, the need for such a course increases. Second stage structural efficiency variations to major industrial awards, such as those in the metals industry, allow for the establishment of enterprise based joint (management and shop floor) consultative committees. The effectiveness of their operations is likely to be impeded by a lack of basic industrial relations understanding. The availability of such basic course content, developed, as it was, using a range of expertise, is timely and relevant.

The content selected assists in achieving informed participation in the process of micro economic reform, whilst mitigating against the likelihood of "accidental" industrial disputation. The unprejudiced nature of the content selected offers course participants (industrial relations novices) that fundamental knowledge base which is necessary for competence in decision making at workplace level. This is extremely important, particularly when undertaking an exercise under the Structural Efficiency Principle of the current wage

fixing system. The Commission in Court Session in the State Wage Case (1989, p.16) stated - "Co-operation between employees and employers is expected to be the hallmark of structural efficiency exercises". Inappropriate or inept decisions in such an exercise can provoke industrial disputes or worsen existing industrial relations, breaking down attempts at co-operation and jeopardising the restructuring process.

To facilitate structural efficiency successes, it is important for the industrial parties to receive the same information. This is so if common understanding is to develop, which in turn, proves vital to the success of structural efficiency exercises. The subject matter identified through the study, places sufficient emphasis on current requirements to alert novices to both danger areas and opportunities. Information is provided on a range of fundamentals, from the non-negotiables of the system to the indispensable element for success -- trust.

The industrial relations framework which the content offers, as well as the communications aspect, provides a contextual understanding for workplace level players. They have the opportunity to identify where they fit in the big picture and how they can affect their own situation. This has implications in terms of workforce ownership of

structural efficiency initiatives and their willingness to participate and co-operate in such exercises. Further, it offers a key strategy in successfully managing change in the workplace.

It is not too far fetched, in terms of the scope of the Structural Efficiency Principle, to argue that a basic knowledge of industrial relations could, should or will become part of the job profile of key players in an organisation. The use of the Delphi method in this study offers content drawn from an expert understanding of the kind of knowledge required for that part of a job profile. It is, as Gordon (1974, p.13) asserts "a most appropriate procedure for generating such job profiles in complex industries." Industrial relations, even as a part of an occupation, is guaranteed to be complex.

Significance

This study identified a knowledge base fundamental to basic level industrial relations functioning, for a joint novice group not previously targeted, and through a non-partisan means not previously utilised.

The content selected by the expert respondent population, provides a broad outline which can

either be offered in an ad hoc situation or adapted by trainers for specific industries or enterprises. In the latter settings, it can be used to overcome the dysfunctional aspects of participative content selection and training needs analysis in the area of novice training and development.

The content was specifically selected for presentation in a joint (union and management) training setting. With its focus on joint content selection and justification, and its joint target population, it precisely models the co-operative approach so emphasised in the current wages system.

The process and the content to some extent embody, and certainly do not exclude, major tenets of adult learning theory which rely on participation, ownership and self management if understanding and the transfer and utilisation of learning is to occur. This training course offers a meeting ground for considerations long important in adult education and now important in industrial relations - in fact legitimised by the current wage fixing approach. Thus, by offering the content jointly and utilising accepted learning strategies, the trainer can also model some of the important concepts of the structural efficiency principle and human relations. It provides a wonderful opportunity for consistency of approach.

Obviously content focused on the Western Australian situation. Its application could reasonably be expected to overcome the problems of local knowledge gaps, giving workplace players the basic information they need to function in this industrial relations setting. This information has not been available previously in a short training course, and it is urgently needed to assist the progress of micro economic reform.

The preference of all respondents for a broad interpretation of what industrial relations involves, moving towards the relationships between employee and employer in the workplace, as opposed to concentrating upon rules and procedures, is indicative of the change spreading through the specialist ranks of industrial relations practitioners. Having to some extent been successful in the provision of reasonable working conditions and wages, the "system" is now ready to turn its attention to more difficult tasks. However democratisation of the workplace, and the full use of human resource potential, is still some way off. It will involve time, risk, experience and education. Hopefully this study contributes to the latter.

CHAPTER 7

Summary

This study focussed on one aspect of curriculum development, that of content selection. A Delphi method was used to identify and select content, and justify the choice of topics for an introductory training course in industrial relations.

The results were consistent with the stated aims of the study. These were to supply fundamental information about the industrial relations system and its impact on workplace decisions, which would be capable of adaption to a wide variety of industry settings, and suitable for joint participation.

Study outcomes confirmed findings, from the literature, on the effectiveness of using group opinion for decision making. The outcomes further demonstrated, consistent with the literature, that the Delphi technique provides a viable alternative, in the context of this study, to the more usual training needs analysis or participative planning approaches for determining training course content.

Attention throughout the study was centred on developing the product, as opposed to the process. Whilst the efficacy of the method has been discussed, the significance of this study lies in the content outcomes and the attendant reasons for selection. Subject to testing via practical application, the respondent selections offer a contemporary and primary industrial relations information case. Integration with other aspects of curriculum development, variation to focus on industry or enterprise specific issues and incorporation of recognised learning theory remain the responsibility of training providers.

APPENDIX 1

Letter of Confirmation to Study Participants

APPENDIX 1

Letter of Confirmation

Dear ,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research project "Selecting and Justifying Content for an Introductory Training Course in Industrial Relations".

The project aims to focus on the W.A. industrial relations system, providing an information base which encompasses the fundamentals of the system and its impact on workplace decisions. It is envisaged that the resultant training course would have joint application to union representatives and line and senior management (excluding I.R. specialists).

The Delphi Technique has been chosen as the most appropriate means of both selecting the content and justifying that selection. This involves setting up a panel to gather expert opinion across a range of industrial relations interests. Panel members are surveyed individually in an iterative process designed ultimately to achieve consensus. At this stage, one interview and up to three surveys are planned. Hopefully this will sufficiently identify those areas of industrial relations knowledge and understanding which are essential or important to people who have become involved in making workplace decisions that affect employee relations.

I look forward to our meeting at
(time) on (day/date)
when we can discuss the project in more detail and
your opinions can be gained.

Yours sincerely,

APPENDIX 2

Sample Questions - Round One
Progressively Structured Interview

APPENDIX 2

Progressively Structured Interview Schedule

A number of the following, or similar, questions were used to stimulate discussion.

The interview focused on the respondent's opinions as to which topics were crucial in developing a basic knowledge and understanding of our industrial relations system. Those opinions and the reasons why they were held were discussed.

Interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis, in a quiet atmosphere away from interruptions such as the telephone.

Prior to the interview the purpose and goals of the study were explained and discussed with the respondent. A follow-up letter was also sent.

Sample Questions

Would you outline the areas you see as being basic to having an understanding of how our industrial relations system works?

What topics are involved in area X (etc.)?

Why do you see this as being important?

How is that knowledge relevant to what happens in the workplace?

What would happen if people operated in ignorance of that topic?

Which topics do you see as absolutely essential in developing a grasp of the current industrial relations environment?

Why/how?

Which areas are of most relevance in the workplace?

Why is that?

What, in your experience, are the most commonly misunderstood/neglected areas in industrial relations?

How do you see this information being utilised on the job?

What is it that makes you believe your opinions are valid?

What, in your experience, are the areas that lead most often to problems or poor industrial relations?

Why is this so?

What are some of the basic industrial relations concepts you feel people have missed out on?

Why are these so important?

What else do you think key people in the workplace need to know?

Can you list five topics you consider to be significant in terms of knowing how the industrial system works?

What are your reasons for listing these?

Are there other topics you consider equally important or almost as important?

What would you say are the basic criteria you have used in identifying these topics?

These questions were not used in any particular order. They were merely examples of the kinds of questions used to help determine which content should be selected and why. The main idea was to promote an informal but informative discussion to identify expert opinion for the development of a preliminary survey questionnaire.

APPENDIX 3

Round Two

Covering Letter to Respondents
and
Survey 1

APPENDIX 3

Covering Letter - Survey 1, Round Two

Dear Respondent,

Research Project: Selecting and Justifying
Content for an Introductory Training Course in
Industrial Relations

Attached is a questionnaire which you are requested to complete and return, as soon as conveniently possible, in the reply paid envelope provided.

The questionnaire is based on a summary of the opinions given by project respondents during their initial interviews and you are invited to reconsider your responses in the light of this summary. Please do not feel inhibited by either the item groupings or the rating scale format. If you wish to make alterations to items, re-group them, or be more specific in your responses, please do so.

You are reminded that the aim of the project is to identify content for a short training course (approximately three days) on the fundamentals of our industrial relations system. Content selection should be directed towards providing the kind of information shop stewards, honorary union officials and line and senior management need in order to be aware of industrial relations considerations and constraints. The development of skills and attitudes in industrial relations is considered, in the main, to be beyond the scope of a basic course such as this.

Respondents can assume that ultimately any such training course would be developed for particular industries or industry groupings and therefore content would be appropriately adapted in terms of workplace specifics. The intention remains to provide a course suitable for joint union and management participation.

It is necessary for respondents to indicate reasons for the content selected. This enables choices to be understood, as well as providing justification for so choosing.

You are also asked to provide, on the attached form, brief details of your experience and involvement with industrial relations and the title of your current position. This is required to establish credibility of the project outside the fields of industrial relations and business.

If you have any queries regarding the questionnaire or the project, please do not hesitate to call me on the following numbers and (after hours).

Your co-operation is most sincerely appreciated.

Selecting and Justifying Content for an Introductory
Training Course in Industrial Relations

Survey 1

Name: Date

Interview responses have been summarised under six major topic headings - historical overview, overview of political systems, overview of the formal industrial relations system, role of trade unions and employers, industrial relations in the workplace and communications.

Each topic and its sub-content is accompanied by a five-point rating scale:-

Significance

1	2	3	4	5
none	marginal	moderate	very	extreme

Please rate each item according to its significance in providing knowledge which is fundamental to the industrial relations system. Trainees will not be industrial relations specialists, but key union and management representatives in the workplace.

Each major topic is also accompanied by reasons for its inclusion. Please rate your level of agreement with the statements on the four-point scale provided.

Level of Agreement

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Where you disagree with a topic's inclusion, please state your reason(s) in the space provided.

Respondents' selections:

Significance

<u>Historical Overview</u>	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
the 1890's strikes	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
emergence of the A.L.P.	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
the Constitution	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
creation of the arbitration system	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
evolution of current wages system	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
effects of history and tradition	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
society's changing perspectives	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
contemporary developments	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
the 38-hour week	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
National & State Wage Cases 1987-89	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme

Respondents' reasons for inclusion:

An overview of history provides an appreciation of the lines of cleavage which have occurred.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

Necessary for people to gain an appreciation of the significance of the changes which have occurred.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:
.....

Necessary so that people can understand what is happening now and why.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:
.....

Wages policy is one of the most important matters of social interest in our community - therefore there is a need to understand the historical and social context of the industrial relations system.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:
.....

Provides a contextual framework so that simplistic interpretations of industrial relations as e.g."class" warfare are avoided.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:
.....

Gives people an appreciation of the compromises which have occurred as well as an understanding of what is ideal in industrial relations.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:
.....

Provides a basic understanding of the concepts which underpin the system.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:
.....

Respondents' selections:

Significance

Overview of Political Systems

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

government and the broad rules

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

government as an employer

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

government as an economic manager

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

A.L.P./A.C.T.U. social compact
alliance

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

Liberals/C.A.I. productivity
profitability alliance

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

impact on tribunals

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

impact on collective bargaining

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

cyclical discontent with the
system

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

legislative change versus the
power of tradition

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

evolution of government policy

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

interaction between political
and economic trends

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

political processes

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

Respondents' reasons for inclusion:

An awareness of the political and economic system aids in understanding and interpreting what is currently happening in industrial relations.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

Current government policy strongly influences or is effected through the formal industrial relations system.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

Such an overview helps people put events and trends in perspective.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

Helps people understand the realities of the day in industrial relations terms.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

Respondents' selections:

Significance

<u>Overview of the Formal Industrial Relations System</u>	1 none	2	3	4	5 extreme
W.A. Industrial Relations Act	1 none	2	3	4	5 extreme
what the Act says	1 none	2	3	4	5 extreme
purposes of the Act	1 none	2	3	4	5 extreme
philosophical basis of the Act	1 none	2	3	4	5 extreme
W.A. Industrial Relations Commission	1 none	2	3	4	5 extreme
purposes of the Commission	1 none	2	3	4	5 extreme
Commission proceedings	1 none	2	3	4	5 extreme
Commission as an active participant (public interest, national economy, etc.)	1 none	2	3	4	5 extreme
conventional -v- current role	1 none	2	3	4	5 extreme
inherent problems in compulsion	1 none	2	3	4	5 extreme
goodwill and discussion	1 none	2	3	4	5 extreme
status, use and interpretation of awards	1 none	2	3	4	5 extreme
standard award conditions	1 none	2	3	4	5 extreme
consequences of breach	1 none	2	3	4	5 extreme

broader contractual aspects

1

2

3

4

5

none

extreme

non-award areas

1

2

3

4

5

none

extreme

range of law in which I.R. sits

e.g. occ. health & safety, workers compensation, equal opportunity

1

2

3

4

5

none

extreme

common law considerations

1

2

3

4

5

none

extreme

Respondents' reasons for inclusion:

The formal system is where people go when industrial relations in the workplace break down.

1

2

3

4

disagree

low

medium

high

Reason for disagreement:

If you wish to use the current system you have to know what that system is and why it came to be what it is.

1

2

3

4

disagree

low

medium

high

Reason for disagreement:

The formal system communicates the rights and obligations of employees and employers.

1

2

3

4

disagree

low

medium

high

Reason for disagreement:

The formal system provides a formal framework for challenging the status quo.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

A knowledge of the formal system forms a sound basis for workplace discussions.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

A knowledge of the opportunities and constraints of the formal system assists workplace participants to form more realistic expectations.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

Respondents' selections:

	Significance				
<u>Role of Trade Unions</u>	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
union structure - workplace to peak council	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
goals	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
rights	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
obligations	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
relationship between union reps. and their constituents	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
roles of union officials	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
role of workplace reps.	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
demarcation and constitutional coverage	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
<u>Role of the Employer</u>	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
organisational structure	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
organisational culture	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
employer rights	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme
employer obligations	1	2	3	4	5
	none				extreme

representing organisational
views

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

relating to the workforce

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

Respondents' reasons for inclusion:

Basic to an understanding of the system is an understanding of the actors in the system and their roles.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

A knowledge of various roles aids recognition that there may not be a collective view or directing authority - e.g. the workforce may not concur with the union; employers may lack unity.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

Helps people understand why players adopt a particular approach or attitudes.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

Employees must be given an understanding of the purposes of the employer's business if disputation is to be avoided.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

Respondents' selections:

Significance

Industrial Relations in the
Workplace

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

collective bargaining

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

concept of an "industrial matter"

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

effect of current wages policy

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

workplace specific issues
e.g. restructuring
job satisfaction
health and safety
English on the job

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

case studies of major disputes

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

politics/power relationships

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

interface between opposing
interests

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

the ends and the means

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

hidden agendas

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

face saving options

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

trust

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

win - win bargaining

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

Respondents' reasons for inclusion:

There is a need to appreciate the distinction between theoretical constructs and practical realities.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

An understanding of industrial relations in the workplace is important so that people, whilst recognising there is a framework to which they must conform, do not unduly restrict themselves.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

There is a growing realisation that people who work together ought to be able to resolve their problems.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

People tend to focus upon the immediate needs of their own situation and workplace and their own problems and interests are paramount.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

Case studies provide a means of reinforcing an appreciation of contexts, roles and structures.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

Case studies provide an opportunity to role-play thereby aiding understanding.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

Respondents' selections:

Significance

Communications

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

effective communication

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

applying the philosophy underlying the formal system

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

dissemination of information

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

sharing information

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

workplace communication channels

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

consultation and participation

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

communication processes - from log of claims, negotiation, arbitration to enforcement

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

available information resources

1	2	3	4	5
none				extreme

Respondents' reasons for inclusion:

Fundamental to the broad system of industrial relations is the dissemination of information about what is happening.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

The resolution of disputes does not occur in a vacuum - people need to understand what is going on in order to make appropriate decisions.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

There is a growing realisation that people who work together ought to be able to resolve their problems.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

It is critical that people understand how things are going to affect them because their "rights" to work, strike, hire and fire etc. are involved.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

Communication sets up a workplace framework to deal with conflict and breakdown in industrial relations.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

Communication emphasises basic democratic principles - it fosters understanding and acceptance that the status of employees is other than that of a piece of machinery.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

Information cannot be locked into management if industrial disputation, misunderstandings and conflict is to be avoided.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

The practical exercising of communications skills helps people understand how the system works.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

The changing nature of industrial relations means that people need to know the various resources and information available to them.

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Reason for disagreement:

.....

Please list any significant or relevant topics or items you think have been omitted:

What are your reasons for including the topic(s) or item(s)?

Any other comments:

APPENDIX 4.

Survey 2 - Round Three

APPENDIX 4

Selecting and Justifying Content for an Introductory
Training Course in Industrial Relations

Survey 2

Below are the highest ranking selections and reasons for selection from Survey 1, along with mean group ratings. Given this feedback, you are again asked to use the accompanying rating scales to indicate the significance you attach to the selections and your level of agreement with the reasons for inclusion. Place your rating in the square box provided. If your rating is notably different from the mean, please explain the difference in the comments space.

Significance

1	2	3	4	5
none	marginal	moderate	very	extreme

Level of Agreement

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Respondents' selections:

Significance Rating 1 - 5

	Mean score previous round	Your new rating
(1) (a) <u>Historical overview</u>	<u>4</u>	<u> </u>
the 1890s' strikes	<u>3.3</u>	<u> </u>
creation of the arbitration system	<u>3.6</u>	<u> </u>
evolution of current wages system	<u>3.8</u>	<u> </u>
contemporary developments	<u>4</u>	<u> </u>
National and State Wage Cases 1987 - 1989	<u>3.7</u>	<u> </u>

Comments:

(1)	(b)	<u>Respondents' reasons:</u>	<u>Agreement Rating 1 - 4</u>	
			mean score	new rating
		Necessary for an appreciation of the changes which have occurred	<u>3.2</u>	<u> </u>
		Necessary for an understanding of what is happening now and why	<u>3.2</u>	<u> </u>
		Wages policy is an important matter of social interest in our community; there is a need to understand the historical/social context of the I.R. system	<u>3.3</u>	<u> </u>
		Provides a basic understanding of the concepts which underpin the system	<u>3.3</u>	<u> </u>

Comments:

(2)	(a)	<u>Respondents' selections:</u>	<u>Significance Rating 1 - 5</u>	
			Mean score previous round	Your new rating
		<u>Contemporary Political Climate</u>	<u>n/a</u>	<u> </u>
		A.L.P./A.C.T.U. social compact alliance	<u>4</u>	<u> </u>
		government as an economic manager	<u>4</u>	<u> </u>

Comments:

(3) (b) Respondents' reasons:

Agreement Rating 1 - 4

mean score new rating

An awareness of the political
and economic climate aids in
understanding and interpreting
what is currently happening
in I.R.

[3.2]

[]

Comments:

Respondents' selections:

Significance Rating 1 - 5

Mean score
previous round

Your new
rating

(3) (a) Overview of the Formal
I.R. System

[4.1]

[]

purposes of the W.A.
Industrial Relations Act

[3.6]

[]

purposes of the W.A. Indus-
trial Relations Commission

[3.6]

[]

goodwill and discussion

[3.8]

[]

status, use and inter-
pretation of awards

[3.6]

[]

Comments:

(3) (b) Respondents' reasons:

Agreement Rating 1 - 4

mean score new rating

Those wishing to use the
current system have to know
what that system is and why
it came to be what it is

3.2

A knowledge of the opportunities
and constraints of the formal
system assists workplace
participants to form more
realistic expectations

3.1

Comments:

(3) (c) New Suggestion from Survey 1 -

Commission procedure - a brief, practical look at
relevant protocol (e.g. do I have to answer
questions, what if I need a break?)

Significance

1	2	3	4	5
none	marginal	moderate	very	extreme

Comments:

Reason: Such knowledge helps to build confidence and
de-mystify the process.

Level of Agreement

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Comments:

Respondents' selections:

Significance Rating 1 - 5

		Mean score previous round	Your new rating
(4)	(a) (i) <u>Role of Trade Unions</u>	<u>4.6</u>	<input type="text"/>
	union structure - work- place to peak structure	<u>3.6</u>	<input type="text"/>
	goals	<u>3.8</u>	<input type="text"/>
	rights and obligations	<u>3.8</u>	<input type="text"/>
	relationship between union reps. and their constituents	<u>3.8</u>	<input type="text"/>
	roles of union officials	<u>3.8</u>	<input type="text"/>
	role of workplace reps.	<u>3.8</u>	<input type="text"/>

Comments:

(ii) <u>Role of the Employer</u>	<u>4.5</u>	<input type="text"/>
organisational structure	<u>3.7</u>	<input type="text"/>
employer rights	<u>3.7</u>	<input type="text"/>
employer obligations	<u>4</u>	<input type="text"/>
relating to the workforce	<u>3.8</u>	<input type="text"/>

Comments:

(4) (b) Respondents' reasons:

Agreement Rating 1 - 4

	mean score	new rating
Basic to an understanding of the system is an understanding of the actors in the system and their roles	<u>3.3</u>	<input type="text"/>
Helps people understand why players adopt a particular approach or attitude	<u>3.1</u>	<input type="text"/>

Comments:

Respondents' selections:

Significance Rating 1 - 5

	Mean score previous round	Your new rating
(5) (a) <u>Industrial Relations in the Workplace</u>	<u>4.7</u>	<input type="text"/>
collective bargaining	<u>3.7</u>	<input type="text"/>
effect of current wages policy	<u>4.1</u>	<input type="text"/>
workplace specific issues e.g. restructuring health and safety English on the job	<u>4.3</u>	<input type="text"/>
trust	<u>4</u>	<input type="text"/>
win - win bargaining	<u>4.1</u>	<input type="text"/>

Comments:

(5) (b) Respondents' reasons:

Agreement Rating 1 - 4

	mean score	new rating
There is a need to appreciate the distinction between theoretical constructs and practical realities	<u>3.2</u>	<input type="text"/>
An understanding of I.R. in the workplace enables people, whilst recognising there is a framework to which they must conform, to not unduly restrict themselves	<u>3.5</u>	<input type="text"/>
There is a growing realisation that people who work together ought to be able to resolve their problems	<u>3.4</u>	<input type="text"/>
People tend to focus upon the immediate needs of their own situation and workplace and their own problems and interests are paramount	<u>3.7</u>	<input type="text"/>

Comments:

(5) (c) New Suggestion from Survey 1 -

- (i) Possible future directions for workplace I.R. -
i.e. where are "we" heading?

Significance

1	2	3	4	5
none	marginal	moderate	very	extreme

- (ii) Basic I.R. philosophy - i.e. what do "we" want
and value in an I.R. system?

Significance

1	2	3	4	5
none	marginal	moderate	very	extreme

Comments:

Reason: There is a need to develop a new I.R. approach
based on inter-dependence.

Level of Agreement

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Comments:

Respondents' selections:

Significance Rating 1 - 5

Mean score
previous round Your new
rating

(6) (a) <u>Communications</u>	<u>4.3</u>	<input type="text"/>
effective communication	<u>4.4</u>	<input type="text"/>
sharing information	<u>4.2</u>	<input type="text"/>
disseminating information	<u>4.1</u>	<input type="text"/>
workplace communication channels	<u>4.3</u>	<input type="text"/>
consultation and participation	<u>4.2</u>	<input type="text"/>
communication processes - from log of claims, negotiation, arbitration, enforcement	<u>3.8</u>	<input type="text"/>
available information resources	<u>3.8</u>	<input type="text"/>

Comments:

(6) (b) Respondents' reasons:

Agreement Rating 1 - 4

mean score new rating

Fundamental to the broad system of I.R. is the dissemination of inform- ation about what is happening	<u>3.2</u>	<input type="text"/>
The resolution of disputes does not occur in a vacuum - people need to understand what is going on in order to make appropriate decisions	<u>3.6</u>	<input type="text"/>
It is a critical that people understand how things are going to affect them because their "rights" to work, strike, hire, fire, etc. are involved	<u>3.2</u>	<input type="text"/>

Communication sets up a work-
place framework to deal with
conflict and breakdown in
industrial relations

3.3

Communication emphasises basic
democratic principles - it
fosters understanding and
acceptance that the status of
employees is other than a piece
of machinery

3.7

Information cannot be locked
into management if industrial
disputation, misunderstandings
and conflict are to be avoided

3.7

The changing nature of
industrial relations means that
people need to know the various
resources and information
available to them

3.3

Comments:

(6) (c) New Suggestion from Survey 1 -

Communication and reaction in a crisis situation -
e.g. a brief look at aspects such as "buck passing"
and "scape goating".

Significance

1	2	3	4	5
none	marginal	moderate	very	extreme

Comments:

Reason: Recognising the negative aspects of
communication may assist workplace participants to either
avoid or remedy the situation.

Level of Agreement

1	2	3	4
disagree	low	medium	high

Comments:

Summary:

(1) In order for people such as shop stewards and line management to have a sound basic understanding of industrial relations they need to have information on the following:-

(2) This is essential because -

Addendum - suggestions or comments:

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