

SURVEY OF CURRENT WRITING ON TRENDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Since the time of European settlement in Australia the teaching of religious education has been influenced by several trends. This article presents a comprehensive overview of the range of influences underpinning teaching and learning in religious education. To assist the religion teacher in an understanding of the trends that have influenced religious education programs the following approaches will be outlined:

- the catechetical approach through the catechism
- the kerygmatic approach
- the life centred approach
- the shared praxis approach
- the phenomenological approach
- the typological approach
- the educational approach

The Catechetical Approach through the Catechism

Early Church

From the time of European settlement in Australia until the early 1960s, religious education in Catholic schools was based on teaching and learning the catechism (Ryan, 1997, p. 23). The catechetical approach to religious education had an emphasis on learning church doctrine and the vehicle for such learning was the catechism. The catechisms of the twentieth century contained a series of questions and answers outlining 'all the necessary truths of the Roman Catholic church ranging from beliefs about God and who made the world, through moral obligations to God and even beliefs about one's fundamental identity as Catholics' (Lovat, 1989, p. 5).

The implications of the catechetical approach to religious education in Australia can be understood by exploring the evolution of the catechism in Europe. The term 'catechism' finds its origin in the process of 'catechesis'.

Catechesis, as a term, has ancient connotations: it was that course of instruction, which was given to would-be converts in the days of the early church. These would-be converts, known as 'catechumens' were those who had freely come to the Christian community, declaring a basic belief and asking for further understanding (Lovat, 1989, p. 5).

In the early church, it was the custom for adults who were preparing to become Christians, to undergo an initiation period. During this time they were referred to as catechumens. It was intended

that they would develop the necessary knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith required to be admitted as a baptised member of the church. Up to this point the church did relatively little to recruit children.

The Reformation in the early 1500s pushed the Catholic church into a very strong 'reactionary' mode of operating (Lovat, 1989, p. 6). The German theologian Martin Luther had written a catechism in 1529 for the intended audience of pastors and teachers and in that same year he had produced a second edition for children. The Protestant Reformation had caused one third of all western Christians to denounce allegiance to the Pope and the church's authority (Lovat, 1989, p. 6). This shift of faith along with Luther's reaching out to children alarmed Catholic authorities.

In the wake of the Protestant Reformation an ecumenical council known as the Council of Trent, was held from 1545-1563 (McBrien, 1995, p. 1267). The Council of Trent mandated bishops for the first time to provide catechesis for children each Sunday and on holy days of obligation. The Council argued that the survival of the church depended not only on adults but also on children being instructed thoroughly in the doctrines of the church (Jungmann, 1957, pp. 19-20, Schroder, 1941, p. 26). A series of Catholic catechisms had appeared as early as 1530, but it was not until the Council of Trent, that a catechism was drawn up specifically for the purpose of instruction on Church doctrine. In 1566, during the reign of Pope Pius V, a Catechism titled *Catechismus ex Decretis Concilii Tridentini ad Parochos*, (commonly known as *Catechismus Romanus*) was produced with the intention to help pastors in giving religious instruction to both adults and youths (Jungmann, 1957, p. 24). Towards the end of the fifteenth century Pope Clement VIII commissioned the Bishop of Capua, Bishop Robert Bellarmine, to write a catechism. It was published in 1598 under the title of *Dottrina Cristiana Breve da Impararsi a Mente* (Brodrik, 1928, p. 390) and became one of the most influential catechisms in Catholicism (Ryan, 1997, p. 16). This doctrine was considered so important that during the sessions of the Vatican Council of 1870 plans were made to produce a universal catechism that was to be based on Bellarmine's model (Jungmann, 1957, p. 23).

Eighteenth Century

The introduction of universal compulsory school attendance towards the latter part of the eighteenth

century projected catechesis directly into the learning environment of the school (Jungmann, 1957, p. 27), where the catechism was used as the main learning tool. It was originally designed to assist priests with the instruction of adults who requested further understanding of church teachings. During the eighteenth century it was taken out of its original context and used in schools as the official learning tool in religious instruction for children. The theological reasoning for using the catechetical model in Catholic schools was considered justified on the grounds that children had been baptised and therefore initiated into the faith. It did not take into account that children baptised, as infants neither shared the same freedom as adults to choose nor requested more knowledge about the faith and the teachings of the church. The 'siege mentality' (Lovat, 2002, p. 5) which was expressed as an attitude of 'Catholics against the rest' and was aimed at instructing children and adults to armour themselves against the dangers of turning to Protestantism. It influenced the Catholic church's approach to religious education in Catholic schools from the time of the Protestant Reformation until the Second Vatican Council (Lovat, 1989, pp. 5-7). During the nineteenth century in Australia, concerns about the effectiveness of the catechism as a tool for the religious education of children began to emerge.

Catechism in Australia

As early as 1804 attempts were made in Sydney Cove, New South Wales, to establish a Catholic school and provide religious instruction based on the catechism. However it was not until 1820, with the arrival of Father John Therry in Sydney, that permanent Catholic schools began to be established. The prominence of religious education in Catholic schools was largely a result of the views held and encouraged by bishops and other leaders of the Catholic community. They believed that the Catholic school was the "surest and most effective means of providing religious education" (Ryan, 1997, p. 19). Religious education taught from the catechism was a daily event in the school day. In the nineteenth century concerns about this approach to religious education in Catholic schools were raised. The Marist Brothers, a French religious teaching order with schools in Sydney and Melbourne, had identified some of the limitations of the use of the catechism. As a pedagogical instrument they found it limiting and suggested reforms to the catechism such as making it more appealing to young people in terms of presentation and layout (Doyle, 1972, p. 641).

On the 1885 agenda of the First Plenary Council of Australasian Bishops was the issue of producing an Australian Catholic Catechism. From the Council resulted a directive that all dioceses adopt a

catechism based on a style similar to the Irish *Maynooth Catechism*. This became known as the *Penny Catechism* (Ryan, 1997, p. 26). As the foundation of religious content in Catholic schools in Australia, it shaped and influenced the religious development of Catholic children for almost eighty years. 'The catechism was a complete map of religious life, and knowing it by heart was the means both to avoid danger and to find certainty and security' (O'Farrell, 1992, p. 242). The catechism was considered an authority on church teachings and its questions and answers contained everything that was considered necessary to be learned.

Dissatisfaction with the influence of a dogmatic catechism on the formation of young Catholics reached its zenith in the twentieth century. The sense of repression of many Catholics was perceived in an unhealthy light. The stress on obedience and focus on correct conduct were seen as obstacles to free and critical thinking. The moral and religious growth of a person was measured by the prescribed criteria stemming from the contents of the catechism. Concern that it was out of step with new understandings relating to stages of faith development gained much attention. The catechism was pitched at producing an adult level of faith, which could not possibly be fully appreciated by children (Lovat, 1989, pp. 6-7; Ryan, 1997, pp. 31-32). In the twentieth century, the dilemmas of the modern world challenged the way many Catholics would come to terms with God, church authority, religion and their place in the world. World wars, economic depression and the rise of Communism were some of the factors that challenged the Church's authority and credibility. The dogmatic, authoritarian, pedagogical approach associated with teaching religious education via the catechism was losing credibility (Jungmann, 1957, pp. 27-64; Lovat, 1989, pp. 6-7; Ryan, 1997, pp. 29-33). Consideration of new methods of religious education began to gain much attention in many countries, including Australia.

The Kerygmatic Approach

The kerygmatic approach was strongly focussed on the salvific message of Christianity. Its orientation was towards encouraging students to encounter Jesus as a personal saviour. The Greek word, 'kerygma' is used for proclaiming the gospel message (Engebretson, Rymarz & Fleming, 2002, p. 7). By the 1930s and 1940s some European theologians interested in the liturgy of the Early Christian church began to explore the kerygmatic approach to catechesis. A German born, Austrian Jesuit and theologian named Joseph Jungmann, 'considered that too much store had been placed on intellectual assent to the truths of the church expressed in theological propositions'. (Ryan,

1997, p. 36). Jungmann (1957) argued that the catechism was not the most effective pedagogical method for catechesis for young children. Sacramental and liturgical catechesis was considered more effective in religious formation of the child than catechesis through the use of the catechism (Jungmann, 1957, pp. 284 - 294). Jungmann saw the salvific message contained within the scriptures as a key to evoking similar experiences of glory and joy commonly associated with the early Christians. The kerygmatic approach challenged the Catholic church and its religious educators to bring the joyful salvific message into the classroom.

A pupil of Jungmann's and a fellow Jesuit, Johannes Hofinger (1966) believed that Jungmann's kerygmatic approach to catechesis could be developed effectively for children. The kerygmatic approach acknowledged that doctrine must be known but the kerygma must be proclaimed. Hofinger (1966) argued that catechesis needed to be systematic and that children needed to come to a personal understanding of the joyful message of salvation. Scripture would feature significantly in this spiritual process and once the child had been inculcated in this process they would be better prepared to learn church doctrine as presented in the catechism (Hofinger, 1966, pp. 44-45). Hofinger visited Australia in the early 1960s (Engebretson, et al, 2002, p. 7). He was instrumental in bringing the kerygmatic approach to catechesis to the consciousness of religious educators in Australia. The response in Australia was marked by the production of a text series to be used in schools and parishes based on kerygmatic principles. In 1962 Father John Kelly and a team of catechists, under the direction of the Australian Bishops, produced a text series titled, *My Way To God*.

The series, *My Way to God*, represented the culmination of the hopes of those many critics of the traditional question and answer catechisms who called for bright and cheerful presentations of catechetical material. The books were large in format, brightly coloured with a systematic presentation of the church's story, which included some Australian references. The books contained songs, which could be learned and performed by the class, striking graphs and drawings and biblical references (Ryan, 1997, pp. 39-40).

The underlying assumption of this approach was that the focus on Jesus as God, as presented in scripture, would help to inculcate students into a life of faith in the community of the church (Engebretson, et al, 2002, p. 7). The popularity of the kerygmatic approach extended to the whole of Australia. "The texts, [*My Way to God*], were

prescribed for use in all Australian Catholic schools by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Committee for Education in September 1962" (Ryan, 1997, p. 40). Regardless of its popularity the kerygmatic approach to catechesis was comparatively short lived due to theological and magisterial developments occurring in the church and in society, in the lead up to the second Vatican Council.

The Life-Centred Approach to Religious Education

A key factor influencing the short life of the kerygmatic approach was the Second Vatican Council, commonly known as Vatican II. The Catholic church's authority and credibility had been called into question by many of the troubles of the twentieth century including "a worldwide economic depression, two world wars and the emergence of fascism and communism in the Church's backyard" (Lovat, 2002, p. 5). The aim of the Council was to deal with the problems facing the church and to refocus the church and its relationship in the modern world. Pope John XXIII wanted the Second Vatican Council to consider some of the modern thinking evolving from biblical scholars, theologians, social scientists and others. It was believed that to embrace such new ideas would help to bring the church to harmony with the modern world. At the opening session of the Second Vatican Council in 1962 the Councillor's address to the assembly indicated the intention of the council:

In this assembly, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we wish to inquire how we ought to renew ourselves, so that we may be found increasingly faithful to the gospel of Christ. Coming together in unity from every nation under the sun, we carry in our hearts the hardships, and hopes of all the people entrusted to us (Abbott, 1966, pp. 3-5).

A change in church thinking was clearly on the agenda of the Second Vatican Council. Church teaching on revelation was indicative of this. The influential document on revelation that emerged from the Council was the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* (Abbott, 1966, pp. 107-132) commonly known as *Dei Verbum*. Prior to the Second Vatican Council, scripture and church tradition were considered to be sources of revelation and, in light of this understanding, it was the teacher's role to hand on the truths of the faith.

Dei Verbum made it clear that scripture and church tradition were not sources of revelation, but rather witnesses to it. The Constitution stressed that God was the only source of divine revelation and that

revelation was an ongoing process that God initiated (Abbott, 1966, p. 113). The implications of this understanding of divine revelation contributed to the short-lived experience of the kerygmatic approach, which centred on revelation through scripture. The Second Vatican Council supported the view that God was not only revealed in past events but also through the present events of ordinary life. The sacred and secular world needed to be understood as integral rather than separate, in order to understand this enlightened view of revelation. In light of this view, catechesis was seen as much broader than proclaiming the church's salvation story. Thus one of the key limitations of the kerygmatic approach was exposed: "If catechesis was to be meaningful for contemporary students in Australian Catholic Schools, it would need to emphasise and take account of the life experience and interests of students" (Ryan, 1997, p. 48). This insight produced a new starting point for catechesis. Engebretson, et al. (2002) succinctly contextualise the emergence of the life centred approach in context with the teachings coming out of Second Vatican Council. They stated that:

There were two main springboards for the life centred approach to catechesis. In the Catholic church the springboard was theological and came from the formulation of the doctrine of Revelation (*Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum*, 1965). The understanding of revelation stressed that God was revealed in people and in the events of life. Vatican II reinforced that God was revealed in Scripture and Tradition. There was also renewed emphasis on God as revealed in the here and now. Religious education integrated these broad understandings of God's revelation into a new emphasis in religious education that had life experience as the focus (p. 8).

The influence of *Dei Verbum* and the limitations of the kerygmatic approach challenged catechetical theorists to consider new ways of teaching religious education. In the early 1970s religious educators in Australia were strongly influenced by the Jesuit theologian Amalorpavadass. He visited Australia in 1973, and his understanding of revelation was a major influence in developing a life centred pedagogical approach to religious education.

He argued that,

Revelation calls for faith. Faith is a personal and living encounter with the living God, a total acceptance of the revealing and giving person by a loving surrender of one's life according to His word. All this should result in the sealing

of a covenant and the realisation of a fellowship in love. Therefore our interpersonal relationship is one of dialogue, covenant and fellowship. Therefore man's [sic] response or reaction to God's revelation will be essentially attention and responsibility, expectation and listening, openness and acceptance, and reciprocal self-gift in a total surrender and dedication of oneself. This is what we call faith (Amalorpavadass, 1973, p. 19).

Amalorpavadass promoted a pedagogical approach to religious education, which was adapted as the life centred approach. It emphasised "the sharing of life experiences between students and teacher, reflection on this life experience, and the linking of this reflection with growth in knowledge and affective understanding of faith content" (Engbretson, 2002, p. 38). Catholic education leaders in Australia became convinced that the catechetical developments promoted by Amalorpavadass were valid. The support of this approach was strengthened by the publication of the Australian Episcopal Conference's translation of the Italian document, *The Renewal of Education of Faith* (1970). Carlo Colombo, President of the Episcopal Commission of the Doctrine of the Faith and Catechesis, stressed in the preface of the Australian translation of the document, support for the life centred approach and the importance of personal reflection on life experiences (Colombo, 1970, p. xvi). The life centred approach to religious education has been significantly entrenched in the Archdiocese of Melbourne since the early 1970s. The 1973, 1984 and 1995 *Guidelines for Religious Education for Students in the Archdiocese of Melbourne*, (*Guidelines*) have emphasised a pedagogical methodology, which embodied this approach. This catechetical approach hinged on the understanding that catechesis was best explored through the life experiences of the students because God is revealed in their experiences. The *Guidelines* systematised this into a four-point plan. The schema for the four-point plan consisted of the following teaching and learning process:

- Experience shared (we share our experiences)
 - Reflection deepened (we reflect together)
 - Faith expressed (we come to know our Catholic faith)
 - Insights reinforced (we gain further insights and respond)
- (Guidelines, 1995, p. 27)

The life experience approach to catechesis presumed that students were ready and willing to be incorporated into the life of the church. Such a presumption had a limited effect on many students

populating Catholic schools from the 1970s onwards. Immigration patterns had diversified the population in Catholic schools. There was no longer a homogeneous expression of the Catholic faith. For many people in Australia the church was no longer an unquestionable authority. Some students and their families were not willing to be involved in the faith life of the church (Ryan, 1997, p. 63).

The Shared Praxis Approach

In the early 1980s, yet another approach to catechesis emerged, that of shared praxis. Groome (1991) defined shared praxis as

... a participative and dialogical pedagogy in which people reflect critically on their own historical agency in time and place and on their socio-cultural reality, have access together to Christian Story/Vision, and personally appropriate in community with the creative intent of reviewed praxis in Christian faith towards God's reign for all creation (p. 135).

The shared praxis approach was a response to the growing quest for human freedom, which was perceived as one of the major contemporary challenges facing the Christian tradition. The response within educational circles was to employ strategies where skills in critical self-reflection could be developed. "The goal of religious education, then, was not to deliver static 'truths', nor to determine certain attitudes, but to create critical participants to the ongoing life of the Christian community" (Lovat, 2002, pp. 24-25).

Groome (1980) recommended a five -step religious education program known as the Shared Praxis Model. The five steps were identified as:

- Naming the Present Action: (to reflect on present events and make distinctions between what was really happening and what should be happening).
- The Participants' Stories and Visions: (the beginning of critical reflection on the factors that led to the present situation. It was concerned with the 'why' questions: for example: Why do we do as we do?).
- The Christian Community Story and Vision: (aspects of the Christian story were remembered and told. Participants were provided with an opportunity to see their own experience in light of the Christian vision).
- Dialogue between the Inspirational Story and Participants: (in light of

remembering the Christian story the participant's experience was examined in light of what 'should be' as well as what actually 'is').

- A Decision for Future Action: (Out of an understanding of the way it was and the way it should have been can emerge a decision to close the gap between the lived experience and the Christian vision. At this point praxis was considered to have developed) (Lovat, 2002, pp. 25-26, Ryan, 1997, p. 73).

The shared praxis approach emphasised critical self-reflection by initiating groups and individuals to think in a praxis model rather than to learn theories. This could be achieved by providing a model that encouraged participants to reflect on their own feelings and actions rather than what they should think or are told to think. The aim of the shared praxis approach was to engage the whole person. It was more than an exercise in learning the cognitive dimensions of religious education. It also emphasised the development of faith. Groome (1991) describes it as follows: "...it engages a persons whole 'being'; it subsumes cognition, affection and volition in synthesis as a self-in community who reflects and realises Christian identity and agency. Christian conation means 'being' and becoming Christian" (Groome, 1991, p. 279).

Lovat (2002) questioned the validity of the shared praxis model and its ability to meet the requirements and responsibilities of the religious education program offered in Catholic schools. He acknowledged that Groome intended the shared praxis model to be employed within a Christian faith community. Engebretson (2002), Liddy (2002), Lovat (2002), and Rossiter (1988) have suggested that the populations that make up Catholic schools today are from a variety of religious and secular backgrounds and this exposes the limitations of the shared praxis model which assumes an initial faith commitment. While Groome would argue that it is inappropriate to separate 'education' from 'faith formation' in a religious education program (1991, p. 194), Rossiter argued that the separation was necessary in light of the diverse populations in Catholic schools where not all students are willing to participate at a personal faith level.

The most appropriate slant or context for classroom religious education is to base it within an intellectual study...In practice, one of the most stifling influences on a student's personal involvement in religious education is a perceived 'requirement' that they participate at a personal level (Rossiter, 1988, p. 266).

Rossiter claimed that praxis:

Is an authentic catechesis for adults or youth commitment groups. Because the natural context for shared praxis is different from a classroom with about 30 adolescents who attend religion lessons as part of the school's required core curriculum, the approach needs adaptation for classroom use (1988, p. 269).

While Groome did not specifically associate catechesis with his shared praxis model, Lovat has argued that shared praxis does take on some of the inaccurate assumptions of catechesis when applied to the classroom (2002, p. 31). This mismatch limits the effectiveness of the shared praxis model when used as a model charged with the responsibility of delivering all the requirements of the religious education program relevant to a classroom consisting of students from diverse secular and multi-faith backgrounds.

The Phenomenological Approach

The phenomenological approach originated in Britain and a brief outline of the British approach to religious education in schools is given here with the intention of placing the Australian application of this approach in context with international trends. Unlike Australia, the education system in Britain had not been perceived as a secular institution and consequently its commitment to Christian teaching was enshrined in legislation. The 1944 Education Act in the United Kingdom mandated the daily act of religious worship and instruction in all schools (Hull, 1984, pp. 5-7). Until the 1960s the teaching of religion in British schools was perceived as a confession of Christian faith or an application of Christian faith in the classroom (Hull, 1984, p. 29). From the 1960s the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of the British population challenged the effectiveness of compulsory religious education taught from a Christian faith perspective. A wave of Agreed Syllabuses in religious education appeared in the late 1960s, all with a central focus on Christianity. It was not until 1975 that a major breakthrough in teaching religious education from a phenomenological perspective was cemented in law. The *Birmingham Agreed Syllabus* and accompanying *Handbook* were published in that year and were based on Smart's phenomenological approach. The *Birmingham Agreed Syllabus* abandoned any intention to foster the faith of any particular religion. It focused on the critical understanding of religion and it was taught and understood in the context of secular ideologies. Contrasting and comparing various religious traditions and non-religious alternatives such as humanism and communism would shape a pupil's understanding of religion. The intention of the *Birmingham Agreed Syllabus* was that religious

studies be impartial between the religions and the secular ideologies. The teacher was required to teach each religion represented in his or her classroom or school with the same spirit of thoughtful courteous appreciation and inquiry. (Hull, 1984, pp. 29-34).

In contrast to the British education system, the legislation establishing and promoting education in Australia ensured that it remain a secular institution. However, concern about the value of teaching religious education in government schools gained momentum during the 1970s. During the 1970s and 1980s several state government inquiries in Australia were set up to review State education. The study of religion in Australian schools, it was argued, would help to promote tolerance in a population made up of people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. The government inquiries resulted in the following reports being tabled in various state parliaments: The Steinle Report (1973) of South Australia, the Russell Report (1974) of Victoria, the Nott Report (1973) of Western Australia, and the Rawlinson Report (1979) of NSW. By the 1980s each of the above mentioned states had commenced the process of implementing the study of religion in state schools. Opportunities for Australia's citizens to develop religious literacy began to be promoted through the State education systems. The philosophy behind most of the reports suggested that there was value in learning about religion in general and about the diverse religions present in Australian society (Lovat, 2002, pp. 33-34). The development of studies in religion in state schools had to take into consideration the inter-faith and secular composition of the student population. An approach to teaching and learning religion needed to be employed that would respond to the diversity of inter-faith and secular populations present in schools. The approach favoured in Great Britain that had shaped the *Birmingham Agreed Syllabus* and was adopted in Australian school curricula was a phenomenological study of religion. Phenomenology has been defined as:

a study of the ways in which humans come to know [that] acknowledges that all meaning, knowledge and truth are grounded in a person's experience of encountering objects in their lived reality. This is equally so of people's encounters with religious objects. Religious symbols, people, ideas, buildings and so on present themselves to individuals in ways common to other social settings (Ryan, 1997, p. 100).

Smart was the major architect of the phenomenological approach (Engebretson, et al.,

2002, p. 10; Lovat, 1995, p. 8; Ryan, 1997, p. 102). Smart's phenomenological approach focussed on the content of what should be taught. It was concerned with the logic of religious education and with the consequences of that logic in a secular or religiously neutralist society (Smart, 1968, p. 7). This approach was founded on the theory that religion can be studied from the 'outside'. That is, one does not have to belong to any religious tradition in order to learn about religion. A student taught by this method could gain an understanding of religious beliefs and in so doing become literate in the language of religion but would not be required to accept or approve of those beliefs. The phenomenological approach holds the view that:

religion was a legitimate object of study because it developed distinctive skills and encouraged particular insights. Religion offered a view of the ways people organise and interpret their spiritual experiences and form systems by which to contain and communicate these to each other and to succeeding generations (Lovat, 2002, p. 45).

The phenomenological approach to religious education had intentions that were clearly different from earlier theories on teaching and learning in religious education. The catechetical approach, including the catechism, the kerygmatic approach, the life centred approach, and the shared praxis approach were all driven by the intention of faith formation through catechesis. The phenomenological approach stood clearly in contrast, as its intention was to study religion objectively as a means of gaining insights about a religion from an outsider's perspective. It did not require that a student should have a personal submission to a particular creed in order to have a deep understanding and appreciation of religion. Acceptance or approval of religious beliefs was not a requirement for understanding such beliefs. Smart (1979) identified a structure for the study of a religion. His work indicated that, from a phenomenological perspective, a religion could be studied through the examination of phenomena such as rites of passage, myths, holy times, holy places, symbols, pilgrimages, scriptures, temples and priests. Studying religion from this phenomenological perspective would enable a student to gain insight into the world of religion.

The Typological Approach

Smart was not concerned with how religion should be taught in schools. He was concerned with decisions about what content should be taught (Smart, 1968, p. 7) and such decisions would have implications about teaching methodology. Habel and Moore (1982), two Australian academics, focussed on the 'how' question. They developed a

theory that identified how Smart's phenomenological approach could be implemented in the religion classroom. Habel and Moore's 'typological approach' was based on the understanding that 'the modern world forces people increasingly to confront others with varying religious and cultural beliefs to their own' (Ryan, 1997, p. 105). Social cohesion could be more effective if students gained an understanding of the religious backgrounds of their neighbours. In this context the study of religion 'has a social significance that influences the views of many human beings. Habel and Moore (1982) held the view that students would benefit from learning about the types of component phenomena associated with religions. Habel and Moore's (1982) theory outlined eight 'types' or components shared by religious traditions which students were able to study in order to get an insight into understanding a religion. Certain types or components, originally identified for study by Habel and Moore, were as follows: beliefs, texts, stories, ethics, ritual, symbols, social structure and experience (1982, p. 71). Habel and Moore therefore developed Smart's phenomenological theory and applied it in a practical way for teachers and curriculum developers to implement in a classroom situation (Ryan, 1997, pp. 13-15).

During the 1970s and 1980s state governments responded to the pressure to introduce state accredited courses in religion in schools. "The intention was to offer courses of study that would be equivalent in intellectual rigour and standing to other curriculum areas" (Ryan, 1997, p. 106). State accredited courses in religion were required to not presume a confessional commitment from the students or teacher and not to favour one religion over another (Engebretson, 1991, pp. 9-11). The theories of Smart and Habel and Moore strongly influenced the design of the schema for state accredited courses in religion. By 1992 two courses in religion were fully accredited and implemented in Victoria. One course was called *Religion and Society* and the other *Texts and Traditions*. Both accredited courses in religion consisted of four semester units that could be studied. These courses relied heavily on the phenomenological approach and the typological approach developed by Habel and Moore (Ryan, 1997, pp. 105-108). Phenomenology and typology have not only shaped the Victorian state accredited courses in religion but they have also formed the basis of the learning schema of the Year 7-10 *To Know, Worship and Love* text-based curriculum in the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

The Educational Approach

In the light of various sociological, religious and educational developments phenomenology and typology began to influence the thinking about

religious education in Catholic schools. During the 1990s religious education from an educational perspective gained much attention. Rummery (1975) argued that a systematic approach to teaching the educational dimensions of religious education was essential. Rossiter (1988) argued that the intellectual study of religion was the most appropriate approach to use when teaching religion in the formal religious education classroom (p. 266). This pedagogical approach became very popular in Catholic secondary schools in Victoria and this was reflected in their eagerness to respond to the implementation of state accredited courses in religion. The *Religion and Society Study Design* and the *Texts and Traditions Study Design* began to be used widely in Catholic schools (Engebretson, 1991, p. 9). The educational approach placed emphasis on the educational components of religious education in the formal religious education program. In this context it borrowed significantly from the phenomenological and typological methods. However religious education from an educational perspective did not exclude the faith forming and catechetical dimension of religious education. It did however emphasise that within the formal religious education classroom the educational perspective was paramount (Engebretson, et al., 2002, p. 11). The

implementation of the *To Know Worship and Love* series complements the knowledge-centred educational approach to teaching religious education. While the design of the Year 7-10 textbooks have been influenced by the phenomenological and typological approaches, they are designed within the context of the educational paradigm. The educational approach is knowledge centred but does not ignore its potential to act as a vehicle for spiritual and personal faith development through attention to knowledge, understanding and critical inquiry (Engebretson, et al., 2002, p. 19).

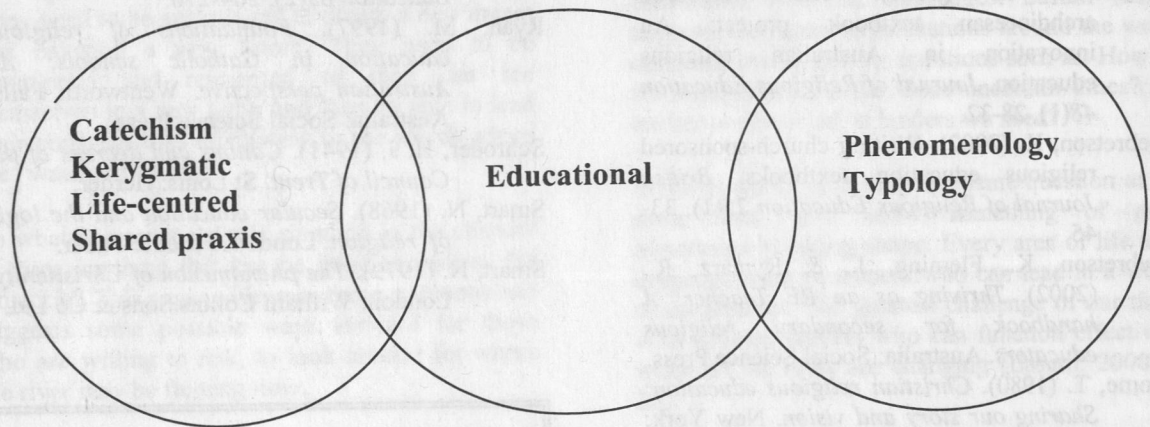
Conclusion

Since the time of European settlement the trends in religious education in Australian Catholic schools have been influenced by worldwide developments. While the purpose of religious education in Catholic schools has a significant relationship with catechesis and the evangelising mission of the church there has been an apparent shift in emphasis from catechesis to knowledge centred approaches. The knowledge centred approaches to religious education in Catholic schools gain credibility in the formal religion class when understood not only as an academic discipline but also as a channel to spiritual development.

Figure 1. Orientations in religious education in schools

Emphasis on Faith Formation

Emphasis on Knowledge



The distinctions drawn between the viewpoints suggest important differences in emphasis without implying that they are mutually exclusive or that there are no significant interrelationships between them. For example, the educational approach is a

channel to spiritual development as well as personal and communal faith through attention to knowledge, understanding and critical inquiry (Engebretson, et al., 2002, p. 19; see also Elliot & Rossiter, 1982; Rossiter, 1981a).

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***Michael Buchanan** is a lecturer in religious education at St Patrick's campus of Australian Catholic University.