Neither post-Enlightenment scientific rationality nor Existentialist subjectivity will serve any longer for the creation of a vision of education which is authentically and fully Christian. For this we need philosophical traditions which take seriously the material and bodily nature of human existence, our rootedness in relationship and community and our capacity for vision as well as critical reflection. (Slee, 1993:336)

1.0 THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The task of this chapter is to analyse the recent intellectual literature of religious education. The purpose is to explore to what degree it reflects the criteria that characterise the philosophical tradition that Slee, in the quotation above, claims will be a ‘version of education which is authentically and fully Christian’. Therefore, this chapter will investigate the literature for what it says about the nature and purpose of religious education; it will examine the literature for information about the foundations for a conceptual base for religious education; it will explore the literature for an epistemology of a contemporary approach to religious education.

1.1 Conceptual Clarity

The term religious education has been used in this study to describe the formal religious education curriculum in Catholic schools and tertiary institutions. It is from that standpoint that linguistic and conceptual clarity will be explored because language both reveals and conceals meaning — and, more importantly, language frames our understandings (Westerhoff, 1977:354-358).
The Catholic church has used, almost synonymously, terms such as religious education, catechesis, education in faith, education in religion, nurture and evangelisation to describe its education ministry. Although the terms often have been, and still are, used indiscriminately they differ in their essential meaning. Since the whole terminological problem is one that beleaguers religious education and prohibits intelligent communication and discussion, one would have hoped that the terms could have been clarified in more recent church documents. This, however, has not been the case. Lack of consensus about the nature and identity of religious education and the lack of theoretical and conceptual clarity continue to arise, in some measure, from a confusion in the terms used to describe it. An uncritical use of terms therefore continues to mask the identity of religious education because such imprecision fails to delineate the intended transactions. In most cases in the related literature no explanation, nor stated theoretical position, is given for the terms and one is left to assume the activity and relationship described: this seems naive and theoretically inadequate.

An attempt will be made to distinguish between the terms catechesis, education in faith, education in religion and religious education, which are the terms most commonly used. However, before detailing the difference between these terms reasons will be given for deliberately excluding the term evangelisation. In brief, the meaning of evangelisation is linguistically and historically different from religious education although it may be associated with some aspects of it: it describes the activity of transmission of the gospel and the Christian message to those who are not Christian believers and its aim is conversion rather than education. Likewise the goal of religious nurture does not concern this thesis since this is achieved by a process of socialisation and, therefore, although associated in some way with aspects of religious education it is not synonymous with the concept of religious education that is central to this study: evangelisation and religious nurture do not have an intentional educational basis.
1.2 Catechesis

Although theorists, both in Australia and abroad, have examined the terms catechesis and religious education which are often used interchangeably in current literature there is, as yet, no total agreement about the nature and relationship of the terms. However, some writers (e.g. Barker, 1981; Bryce, 1981; Rummery, 1975; Scott, 1980) have articulated and made explicit their positions in ways that have helped clarify the issue. Scott (1980:75-96) understands catechesis as a language that has been used specifically in the Catholic tradition and is therefore not universally understood. However, it is closely related to the process, in other Christian churches, that Westerhoff (1976) calls socialisation or enculturation. The word catechesis was derived from the Greek¹ and was originally used to describe the oral instruction of early converts to Christianity. More recently the term catechesis has expanded to describe a pastoral activity, namely, catechetics, which aims to present the Christian message, to promote dialogue amongst believers and to deepen their faith commitment. Scott's main reservation about the adequacy of the term is that its recent shift in meaning has been towards socialisation into religious beliefs and is, therefore, not intentionally educational. Given its root meaning, and its history, the term denotes an inability to place religious issues and concerns in an interactive educational framework of critical intelligence. Therefore, the term catechesis, although allied to religious education, has a related but separate identity from religious education and its meaning is too limited to contain the full range of issues related to religious education as a discipline. For the same reason the term catechesis does not fully communicate the meaning of the enterprise that is the concern of this work: what seems to be lacking in catechetical theory is a critical element, particularly 'any sense of critical ecclesiology' (Boys, 1989:102). It works out of an assumption that 'the taken-for-granted world,

¹ Catechesis comes from the Greek katechein: kata, meaning 'down' and echein, 'to sound'. Catechesis is literally a 'sounding down', a 're-sounding' a 're-echoing down to another' (Dunning, 1993:29).
constructed and maintained by the community, can be delivered to newcomers as the only belief system which is unquestionably valid for all time’ (Barker, 1981:184). This perspective on catechesis dismisses it as an appropriate term to describe adequately the concern of a thesis which is about critical learning.

1.3 Religious Education: Education in Religion, Education in Faith

Rossiter (1983:112-153) also examined the question of language and developed two orientations within the term religious education, namely education in religion and education in faith. He draws distinctions between the two viewpoints which suggest differences in emphasis, without implying that they are mutually exclusive, or that there are not significant relationships between them. Rossiter views education in religion from an educational perspective where the emphasis is on an educational rationale for religious education. Education in religion, therefore, engages the learner at the cognitive and affective levels and seeks to deepen, with sympathetic insights, the individual's awareness, knowledge and understanding of religion without necessarily leading to commitment. This form of religious education has claimed its place in some Australian schools as religious (religion) studies and is now an academic subject in the school curriculum concerned with a systematic study of religion. Basically this perspective recognises religion as an important area of human experience and the need for knowledge about religion as a phenomenon in society. On the other hand Rossiter considers that education in faith emphasises the handing on of a particular faith tradition and aims to increase a person's knowledge and understanding of faith as well as developing a personal religious faith commitment, in the context of a particular faith tradition, but without imposing on personal freedom: the learner's personal response ultimately determines whether education in faith leads to personal faith or not.

In Rossiter's conceptual framework for religious education there is a dialectic between education in faith and education in religion which stresses the
relationship between the faith-oriented and educational intentions of the activity. In conceiving of religious education, more along educational than catechetical lines, he does not necessarily want to exclude catechesis as a possible component, on some occasions, of education in faith. However, he wants to ensure a creative tension between faith-oriented and educational concerns where, by education, he (Rossiter, 1984:321) means ‘developing personal autonomy and critical awareness’.

The term religious education has often been used to express faith-oriented purposes and Rossiter does not wish to use the terms, education in faith and education in religion, to displace the more generic term religious education. He is concerned, rather, to develop two perspectives and to emphasise their interrelationships. The terms education in religion and education in faith can then be used, if desired, as more specific terms when a precise orientation needs to be specified to remove ambiguity or false expectations about what is conveyed by the term religious education.

The choice by Rossiter (1983:112, 128) of religious education as the fundamental general term avoids an uncritical identification of catechesis with religious education: it analyses and interprets religious education from ‘separate faith-oriented and educational perspectives, as well as from a perspective that involves a combination of both faith-oriented and educational concerns’. It also provides a conceptualisation for the distinctions and interrelationships of education in faith and education in religion and recognises the educational base of the activity of religious education.

One of the most recent contributors to re-enter the debate is Groome (1992), who now acknowledges that the distinction between religious education and catechesis is valid, both conceptually and existentially. Although in his earlier writing Groome (1976:199) had been critical of the socialising function of catechesis because it lacked critical reflection and failed ‘to unmask the assumptions of social conditioning’ his present thesis is that the two activities are complementary, particularly in Catholic schools.
Groome submits that the partnership between catechesis and religious education can be effected through a number of approaches. He nominates his own approach of shared praxis (which will be critiqued later in this chapter) as one way that accommodates both religious education and intentional catechesis. It should be noted at this point that Groome appropriates catechesis as a partner to good religious education which he assumes to be education of the 'participative, critically reflective, dialogical kind that promotes ... critical consciousness' (Groome, 1992:45). If Groome's approach is accepted then catechesis and religious education together will educate people in the Christian tradition in a way 'that not only informs their minds but also forms their values and transforms their lives' (Groome, 1992:45).

Provided the activity is primarily educational in nature then it seems that an interrelationship among the various concepts associated with religious education, namely education in faith, education in religion (or religion studies) and catechesis, will provide the synthesis required for a formal curriculum in religious education. The synthesis will ensure that, 'while not excluding moments of faith and experiences of class liturgies, the interrelationship will emphasise the educational perspective and engage in an educational exploration of religion and faith' (Flynn, 1985:147).

This study is concerned with religious education that has an educational rationale and is oriented towards deepening a person's knowledge and commitment within a particular tradition. While the writer's conscious preference is for the more generic term, religious education, to describe the enterprise, this does not mean that a theoretical consensus about the use of the term exists in the literature (Groome, 1992:40). In fact even the significant literature in the field of religious education that will be examined later in this chapter continues to lack clarity in the use of terms. However, the term religious education is the broadest descriptor and accommodates the different, but not mutually exclusive, relationship of education in religion and education in faith. It avoids relying on the exclusive use of faith-oriented terms and intentions as adequate to describe religious education and it
accommodates the interplay that the writer considers necessary between religion and education.

1.4 Epistemology of Religious Education

Although the educational activities of the churches have a long history, religious education *per se* remains a relatively new discipline (Moore 1984:98) and even the term itself is less than one hundred years old. It was used by the Religious Education Association in 1903 to replace more commonly used terms such as Christian nurture and catechesis which were processes by which persons were initiated into, and formed by, a faith community. Its usage at that time reflected the theological perspectives of George Albert Coe and the educational philosophy of John Dewey who were among the liberal scholars who founded the association. The deliberate attempt to emphasise the interplay between religion and education eventuated in a new field of study in search of an identity.

Since 1903 scholars have worked constantly to establish with conceptual clarity the nature and purpose of religious education. Melchert (1973:339) commented that 'at the root of the crisis facing the profession lies the lack of theoretical and conceptual clarity about professional and educational matters.' The urgency that Melchert articulated has been addressed repeatedly in an effort to vindicate the identity of religious education (Marthaler, 1976a; Melchert, 1977; Durka, 1979; Boys, 1980a; Groome, 1980; Moran, 1981; Elias, 1986). As a result of these efforts the conceptual base that undergirds religious education as a body of knowledge and a field of study is gradually and systematically improving. Those who have studied the issue have represented various standpoints and have presented their views at all points on the continuum. Some argued that religious education was already identified within the basic disciplines and proposed it was the 'messenger' of theology without its own goals, ends and methodology. On the other hand a majority of scholars maintained it was an academic discipline with its unique content and established processes by which an evolving body of knowledge
is formed. This latter position has been the subject of some of the more recent research about the nature and purpose of religious education.

In 1980 research was commissioned by the United Methodist Association of Professors of Christian Education which adapted Belth’s (1965:1-24) criteria for defining an area of study. These criteria were used as a framework to investigate ‘whether there is a common subject matter made up of ideas, methods and concepts and a shared community of scholarly research’ (Moore, 1984:90-102). The conclusion was that religious education, although still in the process of evolving, has a community of scholars and a body of literature that are required of a discipline which is made up of esoteric knowledge with concepts, facts and theories that can be taught (Marthaler, 1976a:206, 214). Religious education, therefore, is a discipline in which attention is directed to the ‘most appropriate ways a community’s tradition can be made accessible to diverse persons’ (Boys, 1980a:286).

Because philosophy of education per se informs the study and research of religious education, the different issues it raises throughout history about the nature of knowledge have impacted on religious education. The opposing sides of the epistemological debate between rationalism and empiricism and between idealism and realism are mapped out by Groome (1980:139-151). In a conclusion he reached, but acknowledges as oversimplified, Groome claims that the epistemological question for more than two and a half millennia has been: ‘Is knowledge a reflection of what actually exists in reality (realism) or is it determined by the universal and innate ideas of the knowing subject (idealism)?’ This question was first posed in the strong rational and theoretical view of knowing that was characteristic of the speculative and intellectual philosophy of the early Greeks. Influenced by this philosophy Christian educators assumed an appropriate process of knowing that concentrated on ‘the content of the faith tradition’ (Groome, 1980:159) in a way that contributed to a separation of theory and practice. With Scholasticism, and the Reformers, came an empirical strain that was matched in religious education with a process of theory to practice. This process
became 'firmly established for Roman Catholics' and remained their dominant form of religious education until this century (Groome, 1980:161). The contribution of the Enlightenment was double-headed; it undermined traditional metaphysics and it established the role of critical reason (Groome, 1980:162). A further significant epistemological shift in religious education followed the philosophy of the pragmatists such as Dewey who advocated the experiential way of knowing, by which experience is reconstructed. Religious education influenced by this epistemology aimed at actively and reflectively discovering the Christian message in personal and communal experiences. It maintained at the same time the message of faith and tradition as sources of content.

Of considerable importance in the epistemological debate was the move by Western philosophers (e.g. Dewey and Coe) 'to understand knowledge as transformation' and to recognise 'that knowledge is far more demanding than mere comprehension of information' (Boys, 1989:58). These philosophers re-established the role of praxis as a way of knowing in which the relationship of theory and practice is central. The influence of Hegel, and more especially of Marx, moved religious educators towards an activity that was built on the insight that 'human knowing is an expression of historical human praxis... authentic knowing should be a transforming activity and should transform reality towards human freedom and emancipation' (Groome, 1980:167). The rediscovery of critical praxis by Habermas, as a way of knowing where the constitutive interests of the knowing subject mediate the reality, contributed to an epistemology where the primacy of critical reason is paramount. Religious educators who adopted this philosophy and claimed the primacy of critical reason did not necessarily deny the role of the empirical analytical and historical hermeneutic process. Moore (1984:93-94) suggests that 'praxis is both a way of knowing and a way to more responsible life within the activities of life itself' and from this view of epistemology 'a strong profession can emerge'. The degree to which praxis epistemology relates to religious education will become apparent later in this work when it will be seen
that such epistemology has underpinned both the philosophical and applied work, amongst others, of Groome (1980) and Lovat (1989).

The work that has been done in religious education by scholars whose work has been influenced by critical theory has helped clarify the philosophical problems fundamental to the discipline. At another level research has addressed the task of religious education and the implications for content, method and goals of the enterprise. Scholars within the discipline continue ‘to construct, test, evaluate and reconstruct the theory and practice of religion teaching-learning within the faith community’ (Moore, 1984:9). The major expression of this work by scholars has been made accessible to teachers in the curriculum resources that are based on praxis epistemology. One of the most popular of these, *Sharing Our Story*², which has been used by some of the research participants, will be examined in a later chapter. This and similar curriculum documents have either directly or indirectly, helped shape the participants’ understanding of the subject matter, process and procedures that delineate their discipline and, therefore, their task as religious educators.

1.5 Defining Religious Education

Boys (1989) maps the territory of religious education to show the interplay between particular theological perspectives and particular educational outlooks. Boys’ (1989:193-221) own vision describes the dimensions of religious education by examining categories that are included in two foundational questions: *viz.* — what does it mean to be religious? what does it mean to educate in faith, to educate persons to the religious dimensions of life? (Boys, 1989:5).

Boys’ approach embodies a version of religious education in which the socio-historical context of the learner is important. The impact of socio-historical factors on religious education is a reminder that new experiences and new

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phenomena challenge religious educators to move away from narrow experiences and to widen their horizons in order to bring new meaning to the discipline. It is a challenge for religious educators to examine the history of entrenched attitudes within the Catholic church where some traditions have been valued too much in their own right, and in many cases, have established the objective power of the institution.

Conversion (transformation) is an important category that Boys explores in the first foundational question: she presents it as a goal with both personal and social dimensions. With her usual cautious regard for the provisional and fluid nature of knowledge, Boys offers a definition as a focus for her conclusions:

Religious education is the making accessible of the traditions of the religious community and the making manifest of the intrinsic connection between tradition and transformation.
(Boys, 1989:193)

It is religious education as conceived by Boys that the researcher finds most persuasive. It accommodates tradition and transformation and encompasses more than an objective, static understanding of Christian religious education marked by ecclesial boundaries. The definition has the potential to give direction and purpose to a form of religious education which leads critically to a knowledge of tradition and to a transformation of the person as well as the structures, values, symbols and beliefs of the institutional church.

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3 Boys draws attention to the fact that her definition has four fundamental elements: tradition and transformation, and the activities of making accessible and making manifest.
2.0 SIGNIFICANT DOCUMENTS (1970-1994)

The catechism, as a textbook, with its penchant for precision and economy of words, began to diminish in importance particularly after Vatican II when a propositional theory of revelation gave way to an understanding of revelation as 'God's self-communication occurring within the historical experience of human being and becoming' (Barker 1981:72). With the demise of a catechism which was focused on revealed truth, statically conceived, in a question-and-answer format, a religious education within the framework of critical theory has emerged and gradually gathered momentum.

Not all the documents that will be examined in this section are of equal importance, but together they highlight the relevant emerging issues in religious education. The lack of discussion relating to the earlier documents is in stark contrast to the scholarly critiques by theologians in journals, and public reaction in the media and the Churches, to the latest documents — a healthy sign that the issue of religious education is being taken more seriously.

Neither within the individual documents, nor among the documents as a whole, is there complete consistency about the nature of religious education; nor is there agreement about the language used to describe it. The lack of linguistic clarity is a confusing aspect because terms, such as catechesis and religious education, that are different in origin and meaning, are used interchangeably and synonymously. The significance of language has already been considered in this chapter: in this section the terms (e.g. catechesis, religious education) will be used

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4 Bibliographic references for the documents have been listed here alphabetically.

The documents will be referred to in the text by title not author.
as they appear in the specific texts that will be explored as this seems the only way to allow the documents their integrity.

The documents that are to be analysed do not stand isolated from other church documentation and events, nor can the present and predicted changes in religious education be attributed solely to them. The most immediate church event that prepared the ground for many of the changes was the Second Vatican Council. However, an orientation to change was also promoted by various catechetical congresses which were sponsored by the leading European catechetical centres. The first was held at Eichstätt (1960) but several were held in countries that were relatively underdeveloped. It was the congresses in Bangkok (1962), Uganda (1964) and Manila (1967) that prepared the way for the socio-cultural awareness that is found in the official documents. The congress of 1968 in Medellín gave further impact to the social and political implications of Christian faith and made the person in his/her historical context the starting point of catechesis (Rummery, 1975:105). All these emphases were important for the concept of religious education that was emerging and will be found to underpin the principles of the following documents.


*The Renewal of the Education of Faith* is in fact a translation by the Australian Catholic church of an Italian document, *Renewal of Catechesis* (1970), that was prepared concurrently with the *General Catechetical Directory* (1971) and made a premature application of some of its principles. The Australian document, *The Renewal of the Education of Faith*, was translated and adopted by the Australian Episcopal Conference as an official guide for the education of faith in the Australian church.

The Australian version of the Italian document has a different title as well as an eight page supplement which attempted to acknowledge the issues that were specific to the church in Australia. The use of the word catechesis in the title of
the Italian document indicates it aimed at socialisation rather than education. It is to be regretted that the change to ‘education of faith’ in the Australian title was taken to be synonymous with catechesis and that attempts were not made in the Australian supplement to emphasise that ‘education of faith’ has educational dimensions that are not necessarily contained in the term catechesis. While one cannot support the fact that the Australian version was adopted and promulgated without local consultation and consensus, it did address important areas such as personal responsibility for faith (#41), the rapid far-reaching changes in the sociological context of the learners (#128) and the significance of stages of human development in a person’s growth towards religious maturity (#134). It has thus made a valuable contribution by raising awareness of the issues that are involved in the changes that are occurring in religious education.

The concept of adult (#139) in this document is one where the adult has self-knowledge, is mature and integrated, capable of relationships and committed to a Christian witness that gives credibility to the church. Here, and elsewhere, in the document is a recognition that rapid socio-cultural changes challenge adults who need ongoing education to cope with the impact that the progress in science and technology has made on long established norms of morality. The document addresses this realistically and aims to educate the adult to make an honest search for personal values. Despite its unnatural birth and its lack of local culture this document deserved a more significant life than it has enjoyed: it has not been widely studied and is familiar mainly to students who do graduate courses in religious education.

2.2 **General Catechetical Directory (1971)**

Although not chronologically the first to be published the *General Catechetical Directory* is considered the parent document of those that have

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5 References are to paragraph numbers in the documents.
influenced religious education. The Second Vatican Council mandated that a general directory and not a catechism was to be composed to deal with fundamental principles as guidelines for national directories. The particular commission of the council responsible for exploring this matter did not agree that a universal catechism was feasible for a church that experienced such plurality and diversity.

The introduction of the directory made it clear that it contained authoritative principles and norms of the Catholic faith and that the first principles and ultimate objectives of the Christian message were more important than suggestions about methodology and form. Indeed the norms or criteria for the content of the Christian message (#36-69) form the bulk of the document and give heavy emphasis to such areas as the authority of the magisterium and the objective moral order. In fact the language and vocabulary used to articulate the content are conservative and defensive and are no cause for joy to Christians who viewed Vatican II as offering the possibility of formulating doctrines in a language that reflected a move away from the influence of neo-scholastic philosophy. This distinction between content and method persists throughout the document and manifests a lack of appreciation of religious education as a discipline with its own internal and coherent logic which, therefore, demands its own methodology.

The document clearly conceives the teaching task of the church as one of catechesis. However, the scope of what was defined as catechesis (e.g. #23, #26, #30) gave theologians and religious educators hope and encouragement. The directory refers repeatedly to the need to teach a traditional truth in a modern, scientific and pluralistic world, through creative forms and structures, and to teach not merely by repeating ancient doctrine but rather adapting it 'to new problems ... with a growing understanding of it' (#13).

The directory aims to help adults towards an integral faith that responds positively, and with discrimination, to social and cultural changes. It envisages the function of catechesis as addressing new questions in religious and moral matters in a way that recognises the Christian vision of life and reality. Ultimately the
document defines the aim of catechesis as providing a rational understanding of the faith, and more importantly, of relating faith to contemporary issues by generous participation in the mission of the church. An important thrust in the document is the suggestion that content should take account of the Christian response to serious world problems such as social justice, peace and personal freedom.

The assumption in the *General Catechetical Directory*, that teachers of religion are catechists who engage in intentional *socialisation* aimed at religious affiliation is not very helpful for those who believe religious educators are primarily engaged in intentional *education*. However, '[t]he clarification of philosophical positions, the designation of essential cognitive content, and the rationale supporting the nature of the teaching function [that] can be drawn from ... the *General Catechetical Directory*’ (Durka, 1979:40) have contributed to a stronger conceptual base for teachers in Catholic schools and have become a point of departure for further developments.

2.3 *We Preach Jesus Christ As Lord* (1977)

*We Preach Jesus Christ as Lord* was published in Australia in 1977 — six years after the *General Catechetical Directory* had been available to national episcopal conferences which were to take up the mandate of preparing local directories to apply the principles of the general directory to the local churches. For two years, before the publication of *We Preach Jesus Christ As Lord*, the Australian Episcopal Conference had discussed the issue of a directory presumably with the intention of meeting their obligations of writing an Australian document. One senses, from the outcome, that certain members of the episcopal conference experienced impatience, from the paralysing effect of the diversity of positions about the directory which were held by the conference members. The document was eventually published, it would seem, as a compromise. It was distributed as an episcopal statement (not a directory) by the Bishops Committee for Education, with the permission, but not the majority vote it required, for it to be promulgated
with the authority of the Australian Episcopal Conference. It is very much a hybrid document which drew heavily on other official church documents for purposes of legitimation and, therefore, in parts, the language is unnecessarily authoritative in a document that demonstrated it was prepared to face change. Unless one reads it carefully the tone of the language masks its real and new message and reflects a traditional philosophical position that is not in harmony with the personal freedom that, in fact, the text acknowledges.

The task began as a sincere and consultative exercise on the part of the bishops to move towards writing a directory and is the only attempt to date, albeit abortive, of the Australian Episcopal Conference to address its obligation to provide a national directory. One is grateful, therefore, that the members of the Bishops Committee for Education accepted the responsibility of having this document published. If it is studied seriously, in sincere and honest dialogue, it has the potential for stimulating further developments in religious education.

If the title of this document is taken at face value the educational method seems plainly to be one of transmission through a structural-functionalist approach. To add to this first impression there are sub-sections in the text that give high profile to the authority of a hierarchical church. On the other hand, the ecclesiology of the document focuses on the church as an ecclesial community (p.35) where Catholics, in principle, are entitled 'to defer or decline assent' if they have the expertise that justifies their opinion that their dissenting position incorporates what will in future be the understanding of the church (p.30). Perhaps the impression of transmission of static knowledge, however, is not as intentional as it looks at first sight: the document is saved from a Tridentine position by the encouraging philosophical position, within the text, that reflects the insights from Vatican II about personal freedom and responsibility (p.13).

Given the different and dissenting positions held amongst the members of the episcopal conference from which We Preach Jesus Christ As Lord emerged, this document, perhaps surprisingly, gave some hope for a new vision of religious education in Australia. It has recognised the increasing population and urbanisation
in the socio-cultural context of the Australian church which will 'lose touch with the changing world about it' and become a relic of the past unless it is 'constantly changing to meet the needs of the time' (p.7). Furthermore it acknowledges that the Christian message must always be 'expressed in the language and thought forms of a particular culture' (p.15).

2.4 *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979)

The publication of *Catechesis in Our Time*, which is in essential agreement with the *General Catechetical Directory*, followed the discussions at the Synod of Bishops in Rome in 1977 and is the only church document that is devoted almost solely to the catechesis of children. The specific focus on children may account for the attempt made by the document for linguistic clarity: it distinguished catechesis conceptually from evangelisation, in which catechesis is but one moment, and encouraged specialists to clarify further the concepts and divisions of catechesis (#18). The focus on children was interpreted by some to imply, that in spite of the insistence in earlier documents on adult education, the position of priority for adults had been reversed and had settled the argument of adult education *vis-a-vis* catechesis for children. In fact, although the document does consider the religious education of adults as normative (#43), the reality has been, and remains, that the Australian Catholic church invests the majority of its financial capital and personnel in educating children and neglects adult religious education.

The topic of catechesis for young people had been chosen as the agenda of the synod of 1977. This decision resulted from a concern about the breakdown of the cultural order and a seeming movement away from allegiance to the practice of Christian values in society which added to the complexity of the catechetical activity. The task of writing the document started from a keen awareness that the Christian church faced positive opposition and not simply a diffused indifference.
Other factors that concerned the church and caused this issue to be pursued were the ambiguity, distrust and fear caused by changes in the church itself since Vatican II. The facts of polarisation, tension and disaffiliation, that prompted the Synod’s concern, were not imaginary; the changes of Vatican II had not been sufficiently accompanied by adequate opportunities for clergy and laity to understand, internalise and participate in the renewal called for by the Council.

The text recognises the importance of diversity and plurality of our society and recommends accommodating catechesis to the changing situation in which the gospel is encountered today. While its central theme is the necessity of recognising the cultural context in which the faith is transmitted it warned against excessive enthusiasm for acculturation. The document encouraged the use of certain elements, ‘religious or otherwise’ of a group’s culture. However, it argued that the gospel could not be isolated from the cultural milieu of Jesus of Nazareth nor from the cultures where it had been expressed throughout the centuries. It must be transmitted through a dialogue of cultures so that the message is not impoverished and not obscured. Its assumption was that true catechesis enriches a culture ‘to go beyond what is defective or inhuman in it’ (#53).

The potential and scope of documents that relate to religious education (catechesis) rest on their operative theology of revelation. This document (#61) acknowledges that ‘every stirring in theology has repercussions in catechesis; hence the theology of revelation that is operative in the document is significant. In general it understands revelation (#22) not as artificially juxtaposed to life but as concerned with the ultimate meaning of all that makes the web of life. By implication it implies that the test of catechesis is its fidelity to the word of God, as living and active in the life of the contemporary church. It thus recognises that the knowing subject contributes to knowledge which is not confined to statements of empirical fact.

As a logical consequence of the document’s stance on revelation (#49) it insists on renewed, rather than restored patterns and language of catechesis, that are integral — open to all aspects of life. The document (#22) strikes a balance
between a catechesis that takes life as its point of departure and a traditional, doctrinal and systematic catechesis. It argues that Christianity is concerned inseparably with both orthopraxis and orthodoxy — both tradition and life are necessary partners to ensure the integrity of content for catechesis. It warns (#17) also that both ‘routine’ and ‘improvisation’ are unacceptable; the former because it resists change and leads to stagnation and the latter because it begets fracturing and eventually destruction.

Some encouraging aspects of this document are firstly its insistence (#14) that all human beings have the right to seek religious truth without coercion and to act in conformity with their individual consciences. The second source of encouragement is the recommendation (#15) that catechesis must have the best resources in people, energy and material to train qualified personnel. One cannot presume to measure the degree to which individuals exercise their rights to act according to their consciences. However, there is some evidence, as will be seen later from the empirical data for this work, that adults do seek religious truth and act in conformity with their conscience. There is also evidence, in the policies that will be examined in the following chapter, that the mandate about qualified personnel has at last to some extent been realised. The evidence for this is the recognition that Catholic education authorities and Catholic tertiary institutions in Australia have given to the importance of qualifications for religious educators.

2.5 The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994)

This document had its genesis in a request, made in 1985 at the Synod of bishops meeting in Rome, for a universal catechism — in spite of Vatican II’s decision in favour of a directory. Its genre is very different from the ones that have already been discussed. It is, in fact, as the title suggests a catechism or compendium of doctrinal content to serve as a ‘point of reference’ for bishops and writers of national catechisms. Since the initial draft and the nine redrafts were circulated for consultation, before its promulgation, it has been, and continues to
be, the most debated of the documents that relate to religious education. A bibliographic survey (Reese, 1991: 151-157) gives some indication of the extensive literature that covers every shade of critique from condemnation to praise.

Some of the negative criticisms are that the catechism fails to appreciate the hierarchy of truths, the development of doctrine and the teaching of Vatican II (Lash, 1990:244) and it lacks an awareness of enculturation. Those who criticise the document's failure to acknowledge the importance of enculturation argue that a Christianity formed from Jewish and Hellenistic Greek traditions cannot be imposed on a church that is culturally diverse (Metz, 1989:81). One further specific criticism is of the theological emphasis that echoes Trent, rather than Vatican II: for instance the treatment of the seven sacraments stresses the metaphysical approach of matter and form rather than the more participatory emphasis of Vatican II (Reese, 1990a:243).

The positive reviews and articles in the literature range from the doubtful argument 'that although theologians and catechists may not like the idea of a catechism, bishops, priests and teachers support it' (Nichols, 1990:224) to the cautious optimism of Levada (1990:14) who sees it as 'a service to the teaching ministry of the diocesan bishop'. In general the document has not enjoyed a good press from leading scholars with expertise in scripture, liturgy, doctrine and religious education who examined the catechism from their particular areas of scholarship.

The catechism evolved from a Latin text to an official French publication and then translators were challenged with producing an English version. The translators were both helped and constrained by guidelines for inclusive and vertical language. The English translation has not been received kindly by many feminists who claim that the document's traditional androcentric approach to God is not a genuinely liberating view because it perpetuates sexism. The impasse remains with Rome unwilling to yield on vertical language (i.e. about God), which it says must remain traditional. The language of the document also continues to construct a world-view that marginalises women. The present writer certainly
argues for inclusive and horizontal language that recognises the equality and dignity of each person regardless of race, gender, creed or age. However, more work needs to be done to educate church members in general and to involve them in the changes recommended by feminist theology, especially in relation to vertical language, so that people understand why the changes in language are essential.

The real impact of any publication cannot be measured while the printer's ink is still wet. While this latest document is an instrument that could change the tide of religious education it may indeed be a non-event for teachers of religion. It is a book of doctrinal content of over 800 pages: it has been written for bishops and writers of national catechisms and curriculum materials and when the 'nine day wonder' phenomenon, that followed its launching, subsides the church as a whole may forget its existence. However, the catechism presents to religious education a potential danger in the regressive theological position on some topics (e.g. uncritical use of scripture #54) and the impression it gives that Christianity is merely about a series of written doctrines to be believed. If the wording of the catechism, where the theology is regressive, makes its way into new curriculum resources then much ground gained in renewing and refashioning religious education will have been lost.

Religious education is already a battleground where confused parents and teachers are left to resolve the unexplained theological changes and reforms of Vatican II. This document is likely to add to the anxiety and confusion and may short-circuit the progress that has been made.

The document has been promulgated, in terms of juridical authority, as ordinary magisterial teaching. However, as with Vatican II 'the key issue will be not only its formal authority but also its material authority' (Komonchak, 1993:39). History will judge it according to how well it serves the living tradition of the church.

The essence of the five documents has been summarised in Figure 4 (p.113) to highlight their significance for religious education. The concepts will be used
later in this chapter to design a conceptual framework for religious education (Figure 5: p.129).

3.0 DEVELOPMENTS IN THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Without critique and interpretation to save them from becoming obsolete, an unchanging theology and an unchanging religious education in a changing world would become irrelevant. Christianity has always acknowledged this and insisted on the historicity of dogma because dogma bears the marks of the philosophical and theological language in which it was first constructed: what language expresses may change from one historical period to another (McBrien, 1981:70). Therefore, the role of theology has been to interpret both the tradition and the contemporary experience of the community in specific historical times: all this has collateral implications for the nature, purpose, content and process of religious education.

Over more than twenty years theologians from different perspectives such as Baum (1969), Gutiérrez (1973), Schillebeeckx (1974) and Ruether (1985) have critiqued the Christian tradition: they have disclosed different ways of viewing Christianity and brought about a new pluralism of theologies some of which find expression in theologies of revisionism, liberation and feminism. Revisionism 'posits that doctrines express experiences and attitudes of the believing subject' (Cummings, 1992:316). The liberation theologies bring a new awareness to reality by disclosing new perspectives on humanity and Christianity (Durka, 1981:263). Feminist theory, with its difference voices, is characterised, in part, by 'questioning conventional wisdom;... re-examining sources; searching for information overlooked or previously inaccessible...' (Boys, 1989:159). However, whatever the expression of pluralism, these ideologies, and the religious education allied to them, have resulted in an ethical commitment to critical and open-ended inquiry of past and present claims to truth (Durka, 1981:269).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Significance for Religious Education</th>
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| 1970 | *The Renewal of the Education of Faith* | • recognised the importance of stages of human development in a person's growth towards religious maturity;  
• provided for the impact of changes in the sociological content of the learner;  
• acknowledged the need for adults to make an honest search for personal values. |
| 1971 | *General Catechetical Directory* | • clarified philosophical positions that underpin religious education;  
• designated principal tenets of doctrine for cognitive content;  
• envisaged the function of catechesis as addressing new questions in religious and moral matters to recognise the Christian version of life and reality;  
• referred to the need to teach traditional truths through creative forms and structures;  
• operated out of an ecdesiology that conceived of church as people - not structures;  
• emphasised the integration of personality with the cognitive and spiritual maturity of adults;  
• depended on a psychological, personalistic model of maturity as the dominant concept of adult. |
| 1977 | *We Preach Jesus Christ As Lord* | • demonstrated it was prepared to face change;  
• acknowledged the importance of personal freedom;  
• focused on the church as an ecclesial community;  
• highlighted the necessity for interplay between religion and education for religious education in the curriculum;  
• acknowledged that the Christian message must reflect the language and thought forms of a particular culture. |
| 1979 | *Catechesis in Our Time* | • encouraged accommodating catechesis to the cultural context;  
• recognised that every human being has the right to seek religious truth in conformity with personal conscience;  
• acknowledged that the knowing subject contributes to knowledge;  
• argued that Christianity is concerned with both orthopraxis and orthodoxy;  
• insisted on renewed rather than restored patterns of language for catechesis;  
• recommended priority be given to resources, material and qualified personnel. |
| 1994 | *Catechism of the Catholic Church* | • is virtually, as yet, untested;  
• is a content document only;  
• has an operative theology that is regressive;  
• may add confusion and short-circuit progress. |

Figure 4: Significant Documents: 1970-1994
3.1 Revisionism in Theology

The sense in which revisionism will be used in this thesis is from the perspective of the critical theory of Habermas. Johnstone (1992:118-119), in reference to moral theology in the Catholic church, speaks of the process of revisionism as one that depends on historical consciousness and therefore accepts change and evolution as desirable, necessary and possible; this is in contrast to the classical position based on immutable essences. This same process of revisionism, and its implied acceptance and desirability of change and evolution, are evident in approaches to religious education that are emerging in the Catholic church.

According to Moran (1972:126) we are constantly engaged in revisionism at all levels of personal and institutional life and 'so long as there is a future the past will always be changing in meaning'. While Christianity has accepted that the Scriptures convey truths that are of fundamental importance, its insistence on the historicity of doctrine called for the experience of believers to be examined and understanding to be articulated in a way that revises and shapes Christian practice and teaching. As a result of the attempts to interpret both the tradition and the contemporary experience of revelation in the community successive theologies have dealt with the major realities in a theological world view, namely, a view of tradition, a view of contemporary human existence and a view of how these are made accessible for, and are appropriated by, individuals in a specific religious community.

That a religion which is one of both tradition and interpretation will experience tension is undeniable and Christian theologians have experienced this as they attempted to reinterpret foundational symbols and classical doctrines which are repeated in new historical contexts and which by virtue of their repetition, interpret and change their meaning. Theologians in their attempts to find the truth of the past for today are likened by Gadamer (1979) to judges who understand the genesis and meaning of the law and interpret it for its applicability for the present (Haight, 1990:185). Thus theology, both in content and method, increasingly recognises
itself as a pluralistic discipline: theologians have repeatedly faced the challenge of retrieving, at any given time, meaning from human experience which is already graced by God.

Revisionism represents one contemporary theological approach. The term revisionist theology was originally used by Tracy (1975:43) who proposed it as a model for 'philosophical reflection upon common ...[personal and corporate]... human experience and language, and upon Christian texts'. To do this it has engaged the thought of hermeneutical thinkers such as Gadamer (1979:273) who developed the idea that present historical consciousness is shaped by the past. Revisionist theology aims 'to allow the pastoral and religious praxis of Christian life and the social, cultural and political praxis of the wider community to inform one another and thereby inform an adequate practical theology' (Tracy, 1977:83-85). Lakeland (1990:70-102) relates critical theory to theology as a means of addressing the discourse and practices of the Catholic church so as to generate critical knowledge and Christian praxis.

Critical theory and, more recently, insights from poststructuralism have unleashed enormous energy and possibility for change in theology. Liberation and feminist theologies are two specific movements, based on the process of historical consciousness and erasures in discourse, that account for evolution and change. These raise critical questions about personal, social and ecclesial transformation and reconstruction. Liberation theologians (e.g. Gutiérrez, 1973 and Segundo, 1976) are motivated by the radically egalitarian message of Jesus of Nazareth and his concern for the destitute and marginalised (Graff, 1993:129). On the other hand feminist theologians (e.g. Fiorenza, 1983 and Ruether, 1985) raise critical questions that are fundamental to a new and fuller understanding of human dignity and of the invisibility of women in the tradition and texts of the Christian church. Both these movements have already generated substantial scholarly literature. Their methodologies and processes will have further implications for religious education as they make more impact on the mainstream of Christianity.
3.2 Models of Theology and Religious Education

When the discipline of religious education is oriented towards a Christian faith community it is defined more specifically as Christian religious education. Such specific religious education must be informed by Christian theology or it is 'an aberration and will defeat its intended purpose' (Groome, 1980:228). The effect of theology as one of the substantive components of religious education is the facilitation of unity and identity from a common language that articulates an understanding of the Christian faith tradition and the lived experience of persons. Christian theologies over the centuries have ranged from conservative to radical reformism. Tracy (1975), for example, speaks of five models, namely the orthodox, liberal, neo-orthodox, radical and revisionist. Elias (1986:29-47) and Marthaler (1976b:458-468) examine these theological models to determine how they have dialogued with religious education.

The orthodox theologians are committed to a theological system that explains the perennial teachings of the church; for these theologians criticism of the ordered understanding of beliefs is not acceptable. Orthodox religious education tends to absolutise the tradition; it does not criticise the tradition and aims at the development of a person with a particular view of life. Liberal theologians, on the other hand pursue free and open inquiry; they centre on the reinterpretation of the claims of Christianity and for them the scriptures are not the exclusive sources of truth. Liberal religious education is committed to ethical and human values and stresses individual and personal experiences rather than doctrines and confessional statements. The neo-orthodox theologians are critical of the stance of liberal theologians but accept their commitment to scientific and historical methods. They are critical, too, of the dependence of the orthodox theologians on static truth but appeal, in the spirit of the orthodox position, to biblical revelation for transmission

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6 The writer acknowledges that what follows, as a brief comment on the models, relies mainly on the way that Elias (1986) and Marthaler (1976) see the theological models allied with religious education models.
of truth. Neo-orthodox religious educators give centre stage to the bible and attempt, also, to attend seriously to today's world in order to discover the meaning of the gospel for our time. Radical theologians reject the traditional understanding of Christianity because they claim it alienated people from themselves and the world; on the other hand they affirm Jesus as a paradigm of a life committed to human liberation. Radical religious education argues that traditional doctrine and ritual oppressed freedom of conscience and rejects teaching Christianity as a self-authenticating system of truth. Revisionist theology has two sources, namely, human experience and the Christian texts; it consists of a critical reinterpretation both of contemporary values and of the beliefs of Christianity. Revisionist religious education based on hermeneutic theory seeks to reinterpret what it means to be modern and reinterprets the traditional understanding of what it means to be Christian. It is committed to transforming the future by a willingness to accept and contribute to a changing world.

3.3 Revisionism in Religious Education

It follows from the discussion above that the development of theology has collateral implications for the nature, content and process of religious education. Indeed Boys (1981b:135) speaks of religious education as 'a configuration of disciplines': when a particular theological perspective intersects with a specific educational perspective it gives rise to a corresponding expression of religious education. Religious education, therefore, will speak 'both ecclesiastical and educational languages' (Moran, 1977:7-15). The ecclesiastical language of theology will form an equal partnership with the educational in determining the theological and educational assumptions as well as the goals and methods that are to be selected, integrated and made accessible through education that avoids a narrow philosophical formalism.

The concept of revisionism in religious education has been discussed by religious educators such as Marthaler (1976b) and Boys (1980a). Marthaler
(1976b:463-468) defines a revisionist model of religious education as an effort to reinterpret what it means to be modern and to reinterpret the traditional understanding of being Christian: it assents to the positive characteristics of social change and uses the common language of experience. To do this, revisionism applies critical reason to the Christian texts, rituals and symbols and allows them to inform, and be informed, by the praxis of the wider community. Because revisionism is committed to the future the past will always be changing in meaning.

To name what emerged in educational theory as revisionism Boys (1980a:220-252) uses the metaphor of Landscape. Boys admits that revisionism is difficult to classify because of its multiple variants and she emphasises two distinct expressions of it, namely, revisionism and reconceptualism. The position of the revisionists in religious education, (e.g. Moran, 1979 and Groome, 1980) who work within a Habermasian tradition of critical theory, was described by Boys (1980a:244-248) as reconceptualist because they represented a 'clearly dissenting voice and reconceptualist perspective on religious education'. Boys is claiming, in effect, that these religious educators had a critical interest in emancipation. Moran's efforts towards reconceptualism 'revolved around the expansion of the term revelation' (Boys, 1980a:244) while Groome in his use of shared praxis sought 'to ground religious education in critical reflection on Christian action' (Boys, 1980a:247). In common with educational revisionists Moran and Groome aimed to develop alternative ways of education that will empower people.

The implication of what Boys proposes is that religious educators who operate out of the revisionist tradition will be immersed in the totality of historical-social context. They will confront whatever social forms shape and dominate their knowledge and behaviour; they will question assumptions that structure the way they see themselves and others; they will organise their understanding of constraining factors and explore options in, and beyond, their own religious identity. Rather than accepting uncritically values and beliefs they have passively
internalised, they will self-consciously choose to reconstruct their heritage and contribute to its development from as broad a frame of reference as possible.

An understanding of the concept of revisionism as presented in Boys is significant for the conceptual framework of this thesis. Revisionism, or one of its variants, would appear at this stage to be the dominant model in Catholic religious education in Australia.\(^7\) However, it may well be that even now revisionism is being nudged from the edges as the impact is felt from liberation theology, with its new perspectives on humanity and Christianity, and from feminist theology as it re-examines sources and searches for information overlooked or previously inaccessible (Boys, 1989:159). The writer, therefore, acknowledges that there may well be further, and perhaps radical, epistemological shifts in religious education within the next decade.

4.0 CONTEMPORARY MODELS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Two writers who have proposed, what will be called, teaching models for which revisionism is foundational are Groome (1980) and Lovat (1989). The optimum position for religious educators is to understand the philosophical and theoretical principles that underpin these teaching models. However, many teachers are familiar with them merely as structures for scaffolding their lesson plans.

Groome's 'shared praxis' — or, more accurately, versions of it, — is at present the one that has been popularised in recent curriculum materials in Australia (See p.119, n.7). For this reason it is important to examine its underlying theological and educational assumptions. Lovat's model is more recent and is, as yet, less visible in curriculum material. It is familiar mainly to teachers who have

\(^7\) Evidence for this can be found in the methodology and content of the following curriculum materials that are used widely in Australia:

studied it in formal tertiary courses and use it out of a personal conviction, rather than as a process promoted by official curriculum documents. These teachers consider that Lovat’s model does justice to the purpose and nature of religious education for the 1990s. This model, too, will be examined because it stands aligned with revisionism.

4.1 Groome: Shared Praxis

Groome (1980, 1991) took up the ongoing epistemological debate, in the philosophy and practice of education, about what it means to know, and whether the emphasis belongs to transmission of past knowledge, the experiential knowledge of the learner or the needs of the society. He discerned that a similar polarity and tension between past tradition and present experience, existed in recent religious education and he aimed to move beyond the polarity by using a methodology that would bring a balance between past knowledge and present experience and hold the past, present and future in a ‘fruitful tension’. His claim was that a memory of the rituals, symbols and texts, of the past tradition of a Christian people, must be critically remembered and constantly made present, recreated and developed in, and by, present experience to cause it to look forward to, and be creative of, the future. By using a methodology built on what he called a present dialectical hermeneutics Groome claimed a balance could be achieved between the past knowledge of the tradition and present experience (Groome, 1980:194-206).

The contribution of Groome is a significant milestone in religious education which brings together the cumulative history of religious education and contemporary educational theory. In *Christian Religious Education* (1980) Groome presents the philosophical basis for a methodology that is aimed at critical consciousness and intentionality in religious education. In *Sharing Faith* (1991) he takes up again the participative pedagogy of praxis that he structured in *Christian
In essence Groome’s (1980:139-151) interests could be summarised as addressing two questions. He asks, firstly: what ‘kind of knowing’ do religious educators want to promote? Groome assumes, as an answer to this, that religious educators reject, as irrelevant, knowledge that is static, transmitted and ahistorical, that comes from the dichotomous theory-to-practice approach. His second question is: what paradigm of learning can religious educators use to reconceptualise their discipline and effect a radical shift in epistemology. In response to this second question Groome (1980:207-223) has structured a praxis methodology.

Groome (1980:25) defined education as a political activity that leads out pilgrims in time towards a future in which their human possibilities are ever more fully realised. He maintains that educational activity is a deliberate and intentional attending to the future possibility of a person and a community for whom human freedom is integral. Some underlying assumptions in his definition are that education, in its political consequences, is never neutral and that people are capable of changing the world; a further assumption is that the community has a past which is held in the present from which a future can be reconstructed. Therefore, by bringing present dialectical hermeneutics to the past of the community, the learner discovers new knowledge which can be critically and actively appropriated (Groome, 1977c:408-410).

Groome’s (1980:152-183) praxis approach to religious education was influenced initially by Freire’s (1970;1973) philosophy that education is an exercise in freedom and that people are capable of changing their reality. The philosophical roots of ‘shared praxis’ are also in Aristotle’s understanding of *theoria*, *praxis* and *poiesis*, as the three ways of knowing which represent different intended outcomes. Groome was influenced, too, by Hegel in whose philosophy the dialectical relationship between theory and practice is central, and by Marx with whom Groome (1980:167) agrees that ‘authentic knowing should be a transforming activity and should transform reality towards human freedom and emancipation’.
Another philosopher whose work underpins Groome’s approach is Habermas (1972;1974). Central to Groome’s theory is Habermas’ principle that all knowing has a ‘knowledge constitutive interest’ which unites theory and practice. Groome (1980:169-171) acknowledges his debt to Habermas especially for the element of critical reflection which ensures an analysis of the past, through critical remembering and critical reasoning, to unmask ideologies. Groome, however, does not share with Habermas an unlimited faith in critical reason. He, therefore, criticises Habermas’ position that poses ‘reason as the only authority and rejects tradition’ because Groome views tradition ‘as the source of life and truth’. Groome (1980:174, 204) also rejects Habermas’ (1971:176) position that all hermeneutics result in practical control. Groome argues (1977c:419) that present dialectical hermeneutics do not merely preserve consensus within the limits of a past tradition but move beyond the past towards an open future. In this Groome (1980:175-182) takes the same position as Gadamer who claims that dialectical interaction is not a mere repetition of a text but is ‘a new creation of understanding’ (Gadamer, 1979:430). Groome also has reservations about Habermas’ principle of ‘communicative competence which is the mastery of an ideal speech situation’ to unmask ideologies and promote emancipation. Groome considers that such a principle could continue merely to describe, rather than transform, reality because of its complete mutuality and intersubjectivity between participants.

The praxis model for religious education that Groome presents has a structured methodology that emerges from his philosophical and educational positions. The table (Groome, 1977a:58) in Appendix B (p.326) is a succinct representation of the five steps, which he called movements in his later work, of a praxis way of teaching and of the purpose and procedure associated with each of the movements.

In the methodology structured by Groome the epistemology is evident: it is a shift towards a way of knowing that is relational and experiential and shows that there is a dialectical unity between theory and practice which avoids the dichotomy
of a theory-to-practice approach where religious education transmits dogma and doctrine as the delivery system of an essentialist metaphysical theology. The praxis paradigm inserts the learner and his/her life experiences as an 'equal interlocutor' with theology (Groome 1991:63). Central to the approach is what Habermas calls 'analytical remembering' which calls for critical consciousness to decode oppressive reality, to unmask subversive memories and ideologies of the past. Central also is the dialectical hermeneutical principle which Groome (1977c:417) uses in its Hegelian sense of affirming, denying and moving forward. He uses it also in the sense used by Gadamer (1970:86) who claims that we can bring with us the truth of tradition and at the same time expand our horizon. Groome (1976:196) maintains that praxis cannot be merely technical knowledge that legitimates control by productivity, nor hermeneutics alone which through socialisation could exercise practical control by preserving the status quo. Authentic praxis knowledge calls for reflective reason as a means by which reality is mediated to the knowing subject.

The praxis approach to religious education has been structured by Groome (1978:23) as one way of emancipated learning that 'enables ... [religious educators] ... to be creators of ... reality and not creatures produced by it.' Evidence of the positive contribution of Groome to religious education abounds in the high profile it is given in tertiary courses and inservice programmes and school curricula where it challenges teachers of religion to debate and ask serious questions about an appropriate epistemology for their discipline. In the course of such debate queries are raised about what are perceived by critics as some of the limitations in the methodology.

Some of the perceived limitations, e.g. that the proposed model does not adequately provide for an experience of social action (Lane, 1986; Raduntz, 1994) are valid to a certain extent. Admittedly Groome is not essentially concerned with political activity and power and he does not, therefore, address directly the realities of ideologies. However, it is difficult to see from the theology of Kingdom of God that is central to Groome's (1980:35-48) understanding of Christianity how realities
of justice and peace that characterise that Kingdom can be ignored when participants decide on action to bring about those realities in a changing world (Appendix B: Step 5; p.326). The writer would argue, therefore, that Groome's approach provides a praxis way of knowing that allows religious education to address the personal, interpersonal and political aspects of the learner's world-view.

Another of the perceived limitations is that making the community tradition available shows a confessional bias that could jeopardise the freedom of the learner (Appendix B: Step 3; p.326). In response to this criticism, which heralds an issue that might give some grounds for concern, attention must be drawn to Groome's stated purpose to engage in a specific kind of religious education, namely, Christian religious education. It was also his intention to present and make accessible the best current understanding of the theological content for a dialectic between the community's tradition and the individual's experience so that, in authentic dialogue, both disclosure and discovery are involved. One assumes, therefore, that what is made accessible is not an absolutised tradition; that is to say the forces that have corrupted the Christian message will also be acknowledged.

The very essence of the conceptual and operational framework of shared praxis is meant to engage the learners in shaping their individual destinies through critical self-reflection that affirms what is true in present experience, recognises its limitations and prompts them to take on both personal and social responsibilities of the Christian faith by focusing on what can be changed in self and church for the sake of the future (Groome, 1991:25). In this respect Groome subscribes to Hegel's understanding of praxis 'as historical, taking up what went before and transcending it to shape the future toward the development of human freedom' (Groome, 1986:162).

Groome's aim was an integration of Christian tradition with the knowing of the learner — of 'integrating tradition and transformation' which is intrinsic, and constitutive of, Christian literacy and praxis for each generation of Christians (Lane, 1986: 156-159). The integrity and promise of his methodology for education are evident in the following:
It is my intention that in educational activity of any kind our assumptions about and concern for the future must be consciously articulated, not in the interest of maintaining the present and its past in the future, but in the interest of transformation and creation of a new future out of the present and its past. Then, rather than overemphasising knowledge already known or discovery through the present experience, the educator’s task is to hold past, present and future in a fruitful tension with each other. (Groome 1980:12).

Although Groome has not explicitly proposed making religious education an agent of social reconstruction he is committed to a Christianity that effects change in continuity with the past. His approach is not radical and certainly not revolutionary. For that reason, it is perhaps realistic about what can be done at this point in history towards bringing about epistemological shifts in religious education within a specific faith tradition.

4.2 Lovat: Critical Model

In the Preface to his book Lovat (1989) states that an assumption underlying his work is that "modern educational and theological developments have worked together to change the religious education agenda once and for all." This position aligns him with other theorists such as Groome (1980), Moran (1981), Elias (1986) and Boys (1989) who have addressed the necessity of an interplay between the two concepts of religion and education to establish religious education as a curriculum discipline with integrity and authenticity.

Lovat (1989) critiques both Groome (1980) and Moore & Habel (1982) and integrates the positive aspects of their theories into his own Critical Model (Appendix C: p.327). Lovat (1989:41, 42) recognises that Groome’s (1980) model has great possibilities. He acknowledges the benefit, for a curriculum aimed at praxis, of Groome’s use of the theories of Freire, Dewey, Habermas and Huebner. Lovat (1989:76, 78) also critiques favourably some aspects of the typological model of Moore & Habel. In particular he commends its capacity to incorporate
insights from a cross-cultural study of religions and the use of modern curriculum theory.

As a logical outcome of what he considers both the strengths and limitations of the approaches of Groome (1980) and Moore & Habel (1982), Lovat presents his own model, which he calls the Critical Model (1989:85-95) (Appendix C: p.327) as an amalgam of elements of the typological model (Moore & Habel, 1982) and the praxis model of Groome. This amalgam results in a model in which the first four stages reflect a technical (or empirical-analytic) way of knowing; stage five reflects an interpretive (or historical-hermeneutic) way of knowing and stage six reflects a critical way of knowing (Lovat, 1991:19).

The influence of the critical perspectives of Habermas (1972) on Lovat’s model is evident in the adoption of some of the elements of praxis in stages one, five and six. In stage one the critical model invites individual and shared reflection on the learner’s experience of the ‘phenomenon’ of the ‘home tradition’; stages five and six accommodate interpretation, dialogue and praxis for action. The influence of the critical theorists is even more explicit in the sample programmes written by Lovat (1989:99-116) where the curriculum objectives provide specifically for technical, interpretive and critical ways of knowing, as outcomes of the programme. Stages three and four in Lovat’s model reflect Moore & Habel’s concern to develop a knowledge of other cultures and other religions, as well as of the ‘home tradition’. These stages, in conjunction with stage six, take care of the concern of Habermas (1972) and Van Manen (1977) for ‘stretching and stepping out of boundaries, seeing right through one’s own social conditioning and theoretical assumptions’ (Lovat 1989:41).

Graduate students (Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus 1989-1993) engaged in an academic exercise to evaluate their use of Lovat’s critical model. The following collates what were identified as some of the important strengths and weaknesses of Lovat’s model.
Strengths

- expands religious literacy and knowledge;
- ensures the students’ rights to freedom;
- promotes tolerance based on knowledge;
- incorporates recent developments in curriculum theory and gives religious education status as a subject;
- encourages students to understand and interpret the ‘phenomenon’ both within their own tradition, and in comparison with other traditions;
- accommodates both confessional and non-confessional programmes in religious education;
- avoids artificial objectivity because the home tradition is given priority;
- ensures students are empowered, but not forced, to be agents of change;
- does not assume that all members of the school community have a faith commitment;
- allows students to question critically the teachings of the ‘home tradition’.

Limitations

- conceptualisation required for Stages 4 and 5 is too difficult for younger children;
- could promote the idea that all beliefs are relative and perhaps irrelevant;
- emphasises knowledge and facts but is low on affective outcomes;
- risks confusing the goals of social education and religious education;
- is dependent on availability of wide resource materials.

The evaluative responses from which the above were taken give credence to the model’s potential for substantiating Lovat’s (1988:33) claim that in a church concerned with freedom the goal of religious education ‘is not to deliver static ‘truths’, nor to determine certain attitudes, but to create critical participants to the ongoing life of the Christian community.’
The six stage model structured by Lovat is sensitive to developing students' critical faculties through self-reflection, dialogue and discussion; it aims to lead students to a way of knowing that is opposed to accepting static 'truths'; it is interested in education leading to human freedom. The critical model encourages religious educators to critique the distorting effects of self-delusion and the ideological elements of established tradition and encourages religious educators to reorder realities by recognising the moral and intellectual constraints of their personal and institutional history. It is a process built on critical dialogical procedures with regard to generating new insights and new modes of thinking and acting. It has a strong and cohesive internal logic which gives it the potential to deal with a heuristic body of knowledge and is consistent with the claim that 'a curriculum in religion must be managed with sensitivity to the distinctiveness of the content we are dealing with and to the nature of the type of knowledge we are wishing to promote' (Lovat, 1992b:13).

Lovat's critical model has the potential to be a major contribution to religious education: it is underpinned by critical theory and sound educational and curriculum principles that promote interdisciplinary dialogue and cross-curriculum planning, and it respects contemporary developments in theology. It has the capacity to encourage learners to engage in a critical process of appraisal and appropriation of tradition from broader terms of reference, that are outside one's identified religious stance and it openly calls into service an understanding of other religions to provide an enriched understanding of one's own religious tradition.

By structuring his model to meet the needs of curriculum planning that reflects modern curriculum theorising Lovat has given religious education the potential to stand alongside other curriculum areas with credibility as a discipline.

4.3 Dimensions of Religious Education

The information in Figure 5 (p.129) is an attempt to present the dimensions of Christian religious education as an overview. It portrays philosophical and
CONCEPTUAL BASE

Discourses of Religion and Education

PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS

- Freedom of choice is essential for human dignity.
- Knowing is socially and culturally conditioned and combines a dialectic between the historical tradition and the contemporary experience of the cultural subject.
- Religion contributes to human culture in general.

PURPOSE

- To make accessible the story of the community for critical understanding.
- To help the learner discern the meaning of tradition’s past and present claims to truth.
- To awaken recognition of the nature and consequences of Christianity for a believer.
- To encourage a free and responsible relation of knowledge and action.

CURRICULUM

- The anxieties, questions, struggles and hopes of the learner, reflected upon in relation to self, others, world and God.
- Primarily, but not exclusively, the religious stories, myths, language and symbols of the Judaeo-Christian tradition and their relevance for life and faith today.

EDUCATIONAL ASSUMPTIONS

- Teaching is an intentional act that supports learning leading to personal and social transformation.
- Learners are capable of creating knowledge and not simply repeating the past.
- Content is sterile unless it relates to the learner’s life experience and developmental stage.

TASK

- To provide a framework for developing specifically religious cognitive skills and competencies.
- To promote reflection on faith by relating the learner’s experience to the sources of the community’s tradition.
- To ensure an acquisition of the contemporary language, concepts and categories of Christian identity.

PROCESSES

- Interactive, critical, dialogical, interpretive and hermeneutical focusing on disclosure in, and transformation of, the community’s tradition.

Outcome

CHRISTIAN PRAXIS

Figure 5: Dimensions of Christian Religious Education
educational assumptions required when the desired learning outcome is Christian praxis. It accounts for a religious education characterised by an age-appropriate understanding of basic religious concepts and religious texts as well as an acquisition of skills for critical reflection, appropriation of and response to the Christian message.

The figure is a synthesis of what the present writer considers are the best aspects of the literature discussed in this chapter. It is influenced mainly by the positive aspects of recent church documents that were analysed (Figure 4: p.113). It reflects, too, the significant concepts from the writings of Boys (1980a, 1989), Groome (1980, 1991) and Lovat (1989). It is an attempt to portray the foundations of a religious education that offers in both the discourses of religion and education the potential to effect Christian praxis.

5.0 SUMMARY AND SIGNIFICANCE FOR THESIS

From the foundational concepts of religious education it emerges that the term religious education describes an activity that is a synthesis of education in religion and education in faith. It is shaped by the assumptions, goals and methods of the theology with which it is allied and by the concepts of ecclesiology and revelation that inform it as well as by the understanding of tradition that underpins it. At one end of the theological spectrum is a positivist theology which expresses itself in dogmatism and imposes belief uncritically and by authority alone. At the other end of the spectrum is critical theology which is increasingly gathering momentum and underpins forms of revisionism in religious education. From a pre-conciliar view of church that was hierarchical, defensive and characterised by unquestioning loyalty has come a new vision of church which is oriented towards growth of a Christian community through dialogue and consensus. Vatican II, as well as emphasising scripture and tradition as the source of revelation also highlighted revelation's personal, historical and experiential aspects, thus creating the possibility for truth, within Christian tradition, to be informed by the lived faith of
contemporary Christians.

Given the nature of revisionism and of the shared praxis approach to religious education, the following are reasonable expectations of the profession in which critical religious educators engage.

**Religious education:**

- will be immersed in the lives of the people it attempts to educate; education will come from experience that is enlightened by interpretive reflection;

- will be based on teaching and learning strategies that can facilitate inquiry and reconstruct reality; it will develop a Christianity that is active, liberating and transforming;

- will not be a process of simply transmitting truths; it will dialogue with tradition and invite an integration of wisdom from the past to give meaning to the present and the future;

- will resist the errors, mistakes and inadequacies of the past; it will remove the distortions of certain religious metaphors, symbols and formulae;

- will be marked by a creative dialectic between theory and practice, experience and understanding, action and reflection, knowing and doing; it will effect communicative action oriented towards consensus;

- will address revisionist questions such as power and liberation; it will foster in students a greater ideological consciousness and emancipation from hegemonic ideology;

- will develop learners with critical faith who are open to searching for the truth; it will equip students with the capacity to fashion their own values and make their own commitments.

Hope for a strong version of religious education rests on the preparation of religious educators who see genuine value in a total view of the world and of life, as embodied in lived activity, and who can critically study tradition to integrate it into a changing pluralistic world. To do this religious educators will need integrity to confront dysfunctional knowledge and engender less alienating understandings. They will need to 'take a stand on both the basic formal methodological and
material constructive issues that face us’ (Durka, 1981:264). This praxis, or action with a view to change, assumes a new concept of their role for religious educators. It also has the possibility of empowering religious educators to reflect critically on present reality and avoid adopting the rationality and ideology of established tradition. The articulation, by scholars, of the theoretical foundations of religious education has given the profession a ‘base of theoretical esoteric knowledge’ (Marthaler, 1976a:214), a body of literature and a community of scholars (Moore, 1984:90-102). Any professional development that is concerned with critical religious educators must give them the knowledge and skills to be agents of praxis which Tracy (1981:57) defined as:

Practice informed by, and informing, often transforming, all prior theory in relationship to the legitimate and self-involving concerns for a particular cultural, political, social or pastoral need bearing genuine religious importance.
CHAPTER 4: THE CONTEXT OF THE CASE STUDY

1.0 SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL: CAUSE AND CONTEXT OF CHANGE

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) is not the only causal or contextual factor in the last three decades that has impacted on the life of the Catholic church, and therefore on the lives of the participants of this research. However, it has had a significant influence on the radical changes in the functions and content of Catholic education in general, and in particular on the content of curriculum for religious education.

The Council, which in many ways departed significantly from its predecessors, launched Catholicism into a new era by legitimating progressive currents in the church that aimed at moving the church forward to a post-Tridentine position. It constructed a new paradigm of religious consciousness and church order of which Catholic consciousness had no previous experience and for which the majority of the members of the church were psychologically and theologically unprepared. The result was that an initial euphoria gave way to a catastrophic decline marked by 'disorientation which gave way to feelings of chaos, malaise, anger, fear of the future and even despair' (Arbuckle, 1987:16). The confusion and dissidence provoked by the Council was, in part, due to conflicting philosophical positions that underpinned it. The Council engaged itself with renewal from a perspective of renewed scholasticism and at the same time adopted insights from a new philosophy of process. This latter expressed itself in the recognition that the historical contingency of a church that lived in a world of different historical consciousness called for change. This stance moved the church from a static to a more dynamic understanding of itself and precluded a single theological position.

Although most church members were not ready for the crisis provoked by Vatican II, secularisation had affected their lifestyles. The laity at the time of the Council had different experiences of life: many were better educated and had a
different affiliation with the church. The theological developments in the church paralleled sociocultural changes that were already challenging basic assumptions about the structures and activities of the church. The devotional practices of the church, and the rationalistic approach of its catechism, became problematic and contributed to the confusion and dissidence. Catholicism was not merely adjusting — it was being transformed by using ways of thinking, judging and acting that marked the modern world.

An implicit admission, on the part of the Council, was that the church had made errors in the past and that the dignity of the human person, with the right to exercise freedom of conscience, was more important than the institution and that religion had to change to meet the ‘needs of the times’. This was a cruel blow to many Catholics whose identity was dependent on what they saw as the immutability of the church’s teaching and the unbroken continuity with the past. It was inevitable that there were mixed responses to the changes and these ranged, and continue to range, from those who regretted that the change has been slow and rhetorical, rather than real in any major sense, to those who aimed, at all costs, to live in the past or persist in their efforts to checkmate the Council.

Whether or not individuals welcome or resent the changes there is no way back to a dominant ecclesial model of the past. The Council’s principles of personalistic dialogue and collaboration; its endorsement of literary criticism and other hermeneutical approaches to the scriptures; the acceptance of the relationship of experience and theology, are some of the factors that have radical implications for the Catholic church. While on one hand change has been slow, on the other it did not stop with Vatican II which generated agenda for ongoing radical change. The bishops at the Second Vatican Council knew they were not speaking the final word and it is safe to predict that it will be a long time, if ever, before a new consensus emerges in Catholicism.

The turbulence into which Vatican II threw the Catholic church had a particular impact on Australia where the church is highly dependent for its education ministry on Catholic schools and their religious educators. The nature,
task, purpose and content of religious education have changed dramatically since Vatican II and until courses for graduate diplomas in religious education became part of the profiles in tertiary education in Australia, about ten years ago, most teachers relied on their knowledge of the subject from their own school days or, at best, on some units in religious education in their preservice qualification. As later writing in this chapter will show this generated a further crisis in the lack of professional background of religious educators. This has been addressed recently by the professional development policies of employers in Catholic education. It has been addressed as well as by greater availability of graduate courses in religious education in Australian universities — one of these will be examined as the context for the case study that provided empirical evidence for this work.

2.0 NATIONAL DOCUMENTS ON TEACHER EDUCATION (AUSTRALIA)

Pivotal to the concern of this study are those factors that arise from national policies that impinge on the professional development of educators. This section will examine the increased demand for professional development for teachers generated by national policies. These constitute an external factor in the locus of control for the professional development of the teachers who were research participants for this study. The first of the contextual factors is the increased demand for professional development generated by national policies. The more significant of these will be examined to determine to what extent they foster professional growth for the educator.

Since the publication of the *Karmel Report* (1973), and more especially over the last few years, there has been a plethora of national and state reports on schools and teachers. Some of the national reports have been chosen as background for this work to explain the upsurge in professional development. Although some of the reports are not addressed specifically to professional development they contribute data from which the demands and opportunities

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1 *Australian Schools Commission. (1973). Schools in Australia. Canberra: AGPS.*
related to the professional growth of teachers can be established and examined for information that is pertinent to this study.

The Karmel Report (1973:119) maintained that 'the provision of continuing opportunities for the growth and development of the teacher's competence is particularly important when social and educational change is continually making current practices obsolete or relatively ineffectual'. This report was the first to make a major national commitment to resourcing professional development programmes for teachers, in all systems in Australia, and its impact can be seen in the reports that followed it.

2.1 Recent Significant Documents on Teacher Education

Information about the more significant titles published since the Karmel Report have been listed and annotated, in chronological order, in Figure 6 (pp.137-138). The nature and genre of the publications vary in generality and practicality but both the common and disparate elements suggest areas of policy that relate to professional development. An annotation has been given for each title to indicate the content of the document that is relevant for this work.

An examination of the publications listed in Figure 6 (pp.137-138) reveals that the major themes that emerge repeatedly are:

- age structure of teachers
- selection of candidates and patterns of pre-service and in-service promotion, careers and incentive schemes
- partnership and collaboration.

In Figure 7 (p.139) these themes, and their implications, as factors from external agencies that impinge on professional development, have been listed.
Emphasised lifelong learning by teachers and viewed teacher education as a continuous process of professional development. It recommended full-time paid release for one school term, or its equivalent, after every seven years of service and considered that the preparation of specialist teachers was best undertaken at the inservice stage of a teacher’s career.

The major focus of the report centred on the need for a more systematic approach to teacher education. The need for professional development was identified from the perspective of ensuring ‘that teachers can respond professionally to economic, social, cultural, technological and scientific change through the development of personal and intellectual qualities’ (p.7).

The paper looked at what was happening in other countries as well as Australia with a major concentration on the implications of teacher development viewed as a continuum from initial preparation to professional growth throughout a career. Its recommendations were for action in several areas, including professional development.

An underlying assumption of the report was that programmes of continuing professional development are necessary to improve teaching; to maintain the relationship between practice and theory and to equip the teacher to implement changes in policy and practice. It recommended, as figures for global planning, that ten days per year or two percent of salary budgets be provided for professional development programmes.

Figure 6: Recent Significant National Documents on Teacher Education.
1990 Schools Council (Australia). (1990a). *Australia’s Teachers: An Agenda for the Next Decade*. Canberra: AGPS.

This document recognised that teaching had become increasingly professional, complex and sophisticated. It incorporates a proposed charter for teaching and an integrated career structure that argues for career paths built around entitlements (e.g. the rights to paid study leave at regular periods); requirements (e.g. forms of appraisal) and options (e.g. access to additional experience) to provide growth and maturity in a teacher’s professional capacity.


The commitments in this report emerge from the broader context of micro-economic and social reforms. The priorities of NPQTL relate to training, career paths and inservice training to strengthen teaching and the professional development of teachers.


An assumption that is basic to this ministerial statement is that schools in the 1990s are fundamentally different from the schools in which teachers began their careers. To address this rapidly changing professional environment the government has provided funding for teacher professional development: one of the objectives of the programme is to renew teachers’ knowledge of their subject disciplines. It provides for the bulk of the money to be used for professional development needs, determined by the individual teacher, within the context of national priorities.

Figure 6: Recent Significant National Documents on Teacher Education. (Cont.)

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2 The Department of Employment, Education and Training (1993) provided $60 million over three years for the National Development Program. The purpose of the funding was to promote further professional development opportunities for teachers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEMES</th>
<th>IMPLICATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGE STRUCTURE OF TEACHERS</td>
<td>• teachers who have been teaching for more than ten years are now at a stage of stabilisation and experience and most are ready for responsibility and leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• the message of the reports is that career structures and promotions are dependent on ongoing professional development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELECTION OF CANDIDATES AND PATTERNS OF PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE</td>
<td>• adjustments to patterns of teacher training include lengthening the number of full-time years of undergraduate study and increasing the intellectual rigour of the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• views teacher education as a continuous process of professional development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROMOTIONS, CAREERS AND INCENTIVE SCHEMES</td>
<td>• new career structures for teachers are considered an incentive for teachers to engage in ongoing professional development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• bottleneck in career opportunities means that teachers could plateau in skills and enthusiasm unless new career paths reward them for competent performance linked to evidence of recent and sustained professional development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION</td>
<td>• demand by teachers for professional development in their own time still exceeds the capacity of the system and institutions to meet the needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• reports call for a tripartite collaboration of the individual, the employing agencies and higher education institutions.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7: Themes from National Documents
2.3 Factors That Facilitate Teacher Growth

When the essence of the national documents is evaluated there is evidence of features that are capable of contributing to professional development that teachers will find emancipating. At the same time there are omissions that restrain teacher growth.

The following emerge as strengths to facilitate teacher growth:

. With their emphasis on recurrent education the reports are acknowledging that full professionalism follows initiation and induction at a point when the professional teacher is more responsibly autonomous in his/her activities.

. The sense of partnership that is encouraged between teachers and the employing agencies encourages teachers to engage in professional development at the level of contractual agreements with employers and institutes of higher education.

. The recommendation to change the pattern of teacher training has been made on the basis of strong empirical evidence that career patterns evolve through a process 'rather than a series of sharply defined events' (Schools Council (Australia), 1990:105).

. There is a perception that teachers are educators, rather than specialists, who transmit pre-established curricula; their ongoing professional development, therefore, must ensure that they keep abreast of subject knowledge and knowledge of teaching principles that come from advances in information, social theory and human organisations.
There is an acknowledgement that the need for recurrent education is influenced by external factors such as the 'economic climate, currents of social and cultural change and shifts in political and educational priorities' (Schools Council (Australia), 1990:105);

Teachers are being encouraged to make a commitment to professional growth built around entitlements, requirements and options (Schools Council (Australia), 1990:104).

2.3 Factors That Restrain Teacher Growth

The following emerge as some of the factors in the national reports that restrain the professional growth of teachers:

Teachers have been made aware of their need for recurrent education towards professionalism and their responsibility to be active agents in their ongoing development — a need which is not matched by the availability of suitable opportunities and courses.

The reports more often speak of professional development in terms of structures, frameworks, resources, methods and ‘teachers’ knowledge of their subject disciplines’ (Beazley: 1993:13) rather than in relation to forms of personal knowledge and understanding.

The forms of recognition and reward create in teachers a sense of alienation from employers who do not demonstrate a capacity to provide personal responses to teachers’ requests for leave to upgrade (Schools Council (Australia), 1990:111).

The reports focus predominantly on the teacher’s responsibility to the employer rather than on the personal growth of the teacher.
If professionalism, within the culture of teaching, is perceived as one which emphasises accountability and ideal service the profession may well continue to attract recruits who are oriented towards conservatism rather than transformation of themselves and the education they offer their students.

What has been disclosed by an analysis of the national documents on professional development suggests that the facilitating factors constitute opportunities for teachers to accept responsibility for gaining control of knowledge. To the extent that these policies facilitate dialogue for rational choices by the teacher for personal freedom, professional autonomy and critical knowledge, that were identified in Chapter 1 (Figures 1: p.35 and 2: p.54) as characteristic of transformative professional development, then national policies can be said to have avoided 'the hegemony of the current technicist discourse' (Grundy, 1991:1). However, the restraining factors suggest the instrumental needs of the institution are given high profile. To this extent outside coercion may be manipulative and militate against the mutual relationship of the individual and the institution. On balance the very fact that opportunities are provided for teachers to engage in professional development could be productive of positive outcomes. This is a matter of interest in this research and evidence for this will be pursued from the empirical data of this study.

3.0 ARCHDIOCESE OF CANBERRA AND GOULBURN

The national policies that have just been discussed form part of the contextual factors in the base-line data for the participants of this research. However, a further factor for the participants, because they are employed as teachers in Catholic schools in Canberra, has been the policy-making of the educational arm of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn. These policies
have also been analysed to explore what the discourse reveals about the relationship between the individual and the employing authority.

3.1 Professional Development Policies

The Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, through both its Catholic Education Commission (CEC) and its Catholic Education Office (CEO) has formulated policies related to the professional development of the teachers who are employed in the Catholic schools in the archdiocese. The publications that concern this study are:


In all these documents the terms 'inservice', 'professional development' and 'staff development' are used synonymously and without specific definition. However, in the context of the documents it is possible to determine to some extent the nature of the exercise to which the terms refer.

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3 Throughout this section the documents will be referred to by title rather than author.
3.2 Staff Inservice Assessment Needs (1988): (The Lundin Report)

The Lundin Report aimed at determining the inservice needs of all staff in the archdiocese and identified the needs through a process that used the nominal group technique to ensure wide participation. The process of consultation was evidence of the employer’s awareness of the need to work collaboratively with its teachers. An analysis of the responses identified religious education as one of three issues that were classified as extremely critical. It is difficult to determine from the text of the document whether this judgement was a conceptually simple and uncomplicated view of what the teachers perceived as their professional need, or whether, it was a response from a disorienting dilemma, experienced by the teachers, and a bid to break with established answers that they found irrelevant to their experience, careers and classroom practice.

The document also provides a succinct account of the background of inservice in the archdiocese. A significant initiative had been the introduction of the Religious Education: Certificate ‘A’ Course. This was offered initially as a part-time course (relief days) by the Catholic Education Office to meet the need of religious educators who did not want to engage in formal graduate courses.

3.3 School Policy and Administration Procedures (1989b)

In School Policy and Administration Procedures (1989b) section three deals with staff development. It presents professional development as an on-going process which is planned rather than incidental. In this document the Catholic Education Office attempted, through staff development days (pupil free) and supplementary programmes for inservice, to address the specific needs of a particular school. It also encouraged teachers to make opportunity for development through teacher exchange and study leave. What is referred to in the document as staff development would appear to be system or school initiated exercises to ensure resources for specific needs. To this extent it appears to be a policy that is aimed
at structures and frameworks rather than at forms of knowledge and understanding. However, the provision in the document for professional development through exchange and study leave is likely to meet the technical, practical and emancipatory interests of individual teachers.

3.4 Catholic Education Office Support for the Professional Initiatives of Schools within the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn (1991)

The committee responsible for Catholic Education Office Support for the Professional Initiatives of Schools within the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn (1991) was established to plan and coordinate the services of the Catholic Education Office, to advise on inservice provisions and to develop a plan for inservice for 1992 and beyond. The committee describes the level of support for professional development as moving from a high level in the mid 1980s to a considerably lower provision in 1988/89 due to the need for the Catholic Education Office to review and consolidate its financial position. More recently the situation has moved towards a gradual financial recovery and an increased level of support. The committee has undertaken to review the recommendations of the Lundin Report (1988) which was received by the archdiocese, but not followed by the feasibility study it recommended, due to a budget crisis in the Catholic Education Office. The Lundin Report records that at the time of the needs assessment the Catholic Education Office had an annual budget of $100,000 for religious education scholarships. This scholarship scheme provided for, and continues to provide for, teachers to have relief days to engage in graduate study in religious education. The Catholic Education Office has also acknowledged the effect of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) on its efforts to meet the need of more highly qualified religious educators. Consequently, it awards half of its HECS scholarships to teachers who are enrolled in graduate courses in religious education. This distribution meets the request of about only one-third of the applicants who apply each year.
As well as scholarships to support individual teachers in their study for formal qualifications the Catholic Education Office, in 1992, initiated a pilot project and invited schools to trial the recently published *Sharing Our Story* that had been written by the Diocese of Parramatta (1991). Twenty nine schools volunteered to participate and the Catholic Education Office planned a process to support the participating schools. There were several dimensions to the support process provided by the Catholic Education Office for the schools: these included an inservice day, with the Parramatta Consultants, for executive members of the participating schools. Provision was also made for short inservice sessions for classroom teachers who were implementing the curriculum and in some cases inservice sessions were also conducted with whole school staffs and school visits were made by Catholic Education Office personnel when this was requested. At the end of 1992 an evaluation of the document was made by the schools that were involved in the trial project and the reaction was reported as very positive (Barry-Cotter, 1992:8). Although the evaluation yielded a positive outcome, the process that was used by the Catholic Education Office shows that criteria for assessing the implementation of *Sharing Our Story* do not reflect a critical theory paradigm and, therefore, the outcome lacks evidence that would be helpful for this research. There is no evidence from the evaluation that the project aimed at bringing teachers to a conscious awareness of revisionism in religious education and its use of present critical hermeneutics. The evaluation suggests that there was concern with technical knowledge but not with practical knowledge and emancipatory knowledge. Further reference will be made to this pilot project when the data from the research participants in Group 3 are discussed in later chapters of this work.

Comment will be made later in this chapter, in section 3.7 Curriculum Resources, on a systematic analysis that has been done to evaluate this curriculum document.
3.5 *Guidelines for the Role of the Religious Education Co-ordinator* (1991b)

The Religious Education Permanent Committee is an arm of the Catholic Education Commission of the archdiocese. In its publication *Guidelines for the Role of the Religious Education Coordinator* (1991b) it makes statements that indicate the priority that is given to the professional development of teachers. The thrust of the document is reflected in a text quoted from *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witness to Faith* (1982) (#65)⁵:

For the religious educator, religious formation does not come to an end with the completion of basic education; it must be a part of and a complement to one's professional formation, and so be proportionate to adult faith, human culture and one's vocation.

The implications of this text are developed in the recommendations of the Catholic Education Commission document which considers that one way that the formal religious education programme can be achieved is by informing staff about opportunities for post graduate and inservice courses in religious education.

3.6 *Fostering the Religious Dimension of the Catholic School* (1991a)

Fostering the Religious Dimension of the Catholic School (1991a) addresses the need to establish a qualification standard in the archdiocesan schools. More importantly, the body responsible for the document, namely the Catholic Education Commission of the archdiocese, accepts the responsibility of supporting individual initiatives and providing school/regional programmes related to the development of qualifications. The document establishes the need for opportunities for renewal so teachers can develop 'their own spirituality and be aware of current research in scripture, theology and ways of educating religiously' (p.1). It recognises the value

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of experience and long years of service but it is explicit, because of continued development in all fields of knowledge, that these experienced teachers need the encouragement to update their knowledge and skills. At the other end of the experience spectrum are teachers with a Diploma of Teaching from a Catholic college. These teachers will have completed religious education units in their preservice course but are expected to 'demonstrate a commitment to ongoing professional development in religious education'(p.4). The document requires all principals and religious education coordinators, who are more immediately responsible for the implementation of the religious education programme, to possess 'recognised formal religious education qualifications ... or be in the process of acquiring such qualifications at the time of appointment'(p.3). Other executive staff are encouraged to demonstrate a commitment to obtaining formal religious education qualifications. The Catholic Education Commission conveys a message in this document that it is serious about professional development and commits itself to promote the ongoing education of teachers by sponsoring formal courses of study through scholarships, time allowance, financial rewards, paid study leave and inservice. It acknowledges, amongst the reasons for ongoing professional development, the need for teachers to have a knowledge of subject matter and the underlying methodological structures that relate to religious education.

3.7 Curriculum Resources

Lonergan (1974:1-9) summed up the changed context for religious education in the church in terms of a fundamental shift from the normative, unchanging classical culture to a new kind of modern, historically conscious culture which is open-minded and unfinished. The question of how Australian religious educators responded to this, and the personal and professional experience the research participants have had with religious education, is, in part, answered by the post-Vatican II curriculum resources that were written for Catholic schools.
The post-Vatican II resources appeared both as quasi-curriculum documents issued by the various dioceses and as teaching resources initiated by commercial publishers. Comment will be made only on the document published by the Diocese of Parramatta as it relates to the professional development initiative in which Group 3 participants of this research were involved.

*Sharing Our Story* (Diocese of Parramatta, 1991) is a K-12 curriculum in religious education. The title in itself is significant and reflects a growing awareness, in the literature of theology and religious education, of the narrative quality of all religious experience. (Bausch, 1986; Shea, 1980; Harvey, 1981; Navone, 1990). The title acknowledges that the sharing of story is integral to integrating the perspectives of education in religion and education in faith, in Catholic schools. Out of this comes the decision by the writing team of *Sharing Our Story* (1991:12) to define religious education as:

> The life-long process which empowers the teacher/learner to reflect critically upon herself/himself, the world and God in the light of personal experience, Sacred Scripture and tradition. This critical reflection enables the learner to pass judgements, make decisions and respond accordingly.

A systematic analysis of *Sharing Our Story* was made using the criteria in Appendix D (p.328). On most items of the evaluation instrument the document scored reasonably well. However, given the evidence from the analysis, serious reservations must be made about the suitability of some of the concepts for the grade for which they are listed — this applies particularly in relation to some of the scripture texts recommended for young children. The writers of the document chose, as the chief process, a praxis model which is an adaptation of Groome's shared Christian praxis. In adapting the praxis process as structured by Groome

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(Appendix B: p.326) the designers of *Sharing Our Story* have omitted including movement two as a movement in its own right and combined it with movement one. The team that authored the document holds that critical reflection is implicit in movement one. The present writer would claim, however, that unless teachers understand the methodology well the omission does less than justice to the critical nature of the approach proposed by Groome (1991:187) who explains that the intent of movement two is

> to deepen the reflective moment and bring participants to a critical consciousness of present praxis: its reasons, interests, assumptions, prejudices, and ideologies (reason); its socio-historical and biographical sources (memory); its intended, likely, and preferred consequences (imagination).

This second movement is meant to constitute an emancipatory interest in 'decoding the historical reality' and to be 'a source of both personal and social emancipation' (Groome, 1991:187,190). By not giving high profile to this critical aspect the writers would appear to have jeopardised the possibility of authentic praxis unless provision for this is ensured by consciously expanding the purpose of movement one. At face value therefore, the Parramatta document appears to have settled for a variant of praxis that is inadequate because it could lack a truly critical thrust.

*Sharing Our Story* aims to lead students to discover new ways of thinking and acting in the light of experience as well as scripture and tradition: it aims to bring students to a new awareness and appropriation of values and beliefs; to use the right to dissent and 'to pass judgements and to make responsible decisions' about what is to be done' (Jones, 1987a:10). If used as a modified form of praxis in a way that honours the integrity of Groome's approach, this document may well make a contribution towards taking religious education forward to enjoy a position of centre stage amongst the disciplines that promote critical knowing.

Of special interest to this writer is the claim made by the document that it 'will also assist in the personal and professional development of teachers' (p.xix).
Further reference will be made to this claim when the data, generated by the research participants in Group 3 are discussed.

It is difficult at this stage to anticipate the impact the new Parramatta document will have on religious education in this country. In 1992 the Catholic Education Office of Canberra and Goulburn made a commitment to trial it with a view to implementing it in the diocese. Catholic schools in the archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn were invited to volunteer to participate in a pilot project and the Catholic Education Office undertook to plan inservice opportunities and provide support services for the schools that participated in the trial. The degree to which the manner of inservice was adequate will be a matter for further comment when the data for Group 3 are discussed.

3.8 An Overview of the Policies

An analysis of the policies of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn shows that the authorities recognise that its religious educators must be professionally qualified through recent formal study in religious education. The reports are explicit, too, on the relationship of the various stages of teaching histories and professional development. They address the distinction between 'restricted professionality' that honours experience rather than theory and 'extended professionality' that is interested in broader professional education and sees teaching as a rational activity (Hoyle, 1980:49). From the emphasis in the policies on formal tertiary qualifications at graduate level the archdiocese has shown a preference for a specific kind of professional development that is related to award granting courses.

The policies are strong, too, on the differentiated structure which distinguishes the level of responsibility of executive staff members. To support and implement its policies the archdiocese has tried to face the reality of the cost in terms of human and financial resources. It has set in place procedures for a
planned process and intervention strategies to sponsor teachers, to some extent, when they engage in professional development activities.

A negative factor that emerges in the analysis is the emphasis in the policies and reports of the archdiocese on the connection between promotion and qualifications. While this might be an incentive to some it has the potential to demoralise teachers and generate resistance and effect minimum performance.

What surfaces from the policies is the perception of the Catholic education system that professional development is a basis that enables teachers to grow intellectually as they mature professionally. The policies also encourage teachers to make decisions that will eventually give them more control of their careers. The policies of the Catholic Education Office, and their implementation, constitute an important context for the development of the personal and professional growth of religious educators. Evidence will be sought, from the data, to determine whether the policies orientate religious educators towards examining their pre-assimilated interpretation of tradition, from their earlier socialisation in religious education, and engender in them less alienated interpretations. Evidence will also be sought about the ways the system operationalises its policies. Do the strategies for implementation of the policies aim to produce religious educators with a propensity to accept authority and the objective power of the institution — or are they directed towards equipping religious educators to reconstruct their role and be agents of transformation?

4.0 AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY, Signadou Campus

4.1 The Genesis of the Graduate Diploma of Education (Religious)

The Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus offers, as one of its programmes, a graduate course in religious education. This tertiary programme, which is related to the professional development of the participants in Groups 1 and 2 of this research leads to the Graduate Diploma of Education (Religious)
which was first offered in 1981. The need for the introduction of the course was posited on the changing circumstances in church and state.

In 1987 the committee responsible for the process for the re-accreditation of the course engaged in wide consultation with past and present students, community representatives and experts in the field of religious education.

The expressed needs, that came from the evaluation exercise, were dominated by an urgency about supply and demand of religious educators in a society and church that were subject to many changes. The graduates and students of the 1981 course identified their personal and professional reasons for enrolling in terms such as the need for increased knowledge and skills, updating, upgrading, increased competence, need for openness and challenge, frustration. Given the immediacy and the technical nature of the outcomes the teachers had expected, it is interesting to note that the benefits of the course, most frequently named in their evaluation were significantly different. The teachers referred to such things as deepening of faith and the stimulus to reflect and to question the traditional teaching of the church; they also referred to motivation to read further and to study more: finally they named increased confidence in teaching. Amongst other reasons the 1987 document for the course recognised the need for qualified religious educators demanded by the upsurge in courses for adult religious education; by the growing interest in the education in religion in government schools; by the increasing demand by employers in the Catholic education system for specialised qualifications in religious education and by the projected increase in enrolments in Catholic schools.

It must be noted in passing, however, that only half of the candidates who enrolled between 1981-1986 graduated. In contrast to this almost one hundred percent of candidates who enrolled since 1987 have completed the course. While no empirical evidence has been sought for the reason for this phenomenon it seems reasonable to assume that the increasing demands for specialised qualifications as well as the national policies on professional development may be significant factors.
4.2 Analysis and Interpretation

The purpose of this analysis was to critique the conceptual orientation of the document that gives direction to the course in which the research participants had engaged.

At the outset of the analysis it is recognised that there are certain foundational assumptions in the document that reflect the Christian theology and lifestyle to which the writers of the document were committed. This may present an apparent bias and a lack of objective critique by the writers and the 'possibility of ideologically distorted self-understandings...' (Comstock, 1982:381). While this adds complexity for this study, which is operating within a critical theory paradigm, the question may well be raised whether anything of importance can be free from ideology for those who subscribe to a particular lifestyle and values. Because of the religious commitment of the writers of the document an acceptable 'commitment to ideology' (Elias, 1986:158) may well be a constitutive component of reality to give the document meaning within the Christian community for which it is written. In fact the document would be less than credible if it ignored and evaded the essential tenets of Christianity. However, throughout the document it is clear from the many references to the images of social change and historical milieu that have called for changes in religious education, that the writers see themselves both as products and critical interpreters of particular historical forces. They show they are aware of the social realities in which they are immersed and the need for critical openness and constant reinterpretation that is free from naive and absolute ideological enclosure (Hull, 1985:109).

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7 A decision was made to confine the analysis to Section V (Appendix E: p.331). The main factor influencing the decision was the nature and purpose of Section V which is much more philosophical than the other sections (I-IV) and (VI-X). The first part of the document examines the history of the course and establishes statistics to support the need for the course. Sections VI-X deal with issues such as the structure of the course, teaching modes, assessment, staffing and descriptions of unit. These sections, therefore, do not pertain as directly to the concern of this thesis as does Section V.
4.3 Themes

An initial analysis of Section V (Appendix E: p.331) identified in the text six themes that appear to be conceptually important to the problem of this study. The discussion that follows is a comment on what emerged from the analysis as the most significant. No attempt has been made to prioritise the themes; they range from those expressing more general and comprehensive concepts to those that are narrower.

4.3.1 Socio-Historical Factors

There are references throughout the document to a social world of increasing uncertainty. The text is explicit about several of the current tensions that have followed from unprecedented changes, one of which is the women’s movement and its agenda of inclusiveness and empowering the oppressed. The relationship between the individual and society is a constant aspect of the socio-historical theme. In the context of the document this constitutes a challenge to individuals and society to exercise a mutual responsibility to grapple with social issues such as injustice and exploitation in the structures of society. At work in the document, as an outcome of the socio-historical factors, is the expectation that religious education must address the learners in the context of their personal and historical relationships.

4.3.2 Developments in the Discourses of Education and Theology

The document gives high profile to the new theory and approaches in education and theology and the interdependence of these as well as of the theories that describe psychology, faith, moral and religious development. The main praxis of the new theories, in both education and theology, has been within the critical theory paradigm that is dialogical and democratic and made operative through
openness, and critical investigation — phenomena that are consequently expected in religious education. The theme of the developments in the discourses is further related to the growth and study, in Australia, of religion studies as an academic discipline where the goal is religious literacy that is not necessarily associated with religious commitment. For this reason the text is explicit about distinguishing, and yet keeping in creative tension, the activities of religion studies and catechesis.

4.3.3 Competent Religious Educators

One of the needs that was identified as a driving force to mount the course was the move, on the part of Catholic education agencies, towards a demand for specialised qualifications in religious education for staff, especially for promotional positions. It is not surprising then that some of the criteria for the competent religious educator can be discerned in the document. In essence there is an assumption in the text that the course will be intellectually rigorous and that graduates will have a framework for a critical understanding of the substantive content and pedagogical processes of the basic disciplines of religious education. The concept of a professional religious educator is one who, as well as being in control of content knowledge and pedagogical practice, also has a capacity for reflection on human experience and for a critical appraisal of prevailing ideologies.

4.3.4 Knowledge

The epistemology of the document is clearly perceived as the construction of meaning that is interactive and contextualised. The document’s concern with knowledge swings between the need of religious educators for an instrumental knowledge that will ensure efficiency and effective practice to knowledge that is free from taken-for-granted assumptions and reclaims neglected dimensions of the traditions that are life-giving. Knowledge is perceived as evolving from an awareness of the distortions and inadequacy of past knowledge to a knowledge that
can describe, examine and challenge both well-established and newly-emerging questions. The text endorses 'the recognition of religion by philosophers as a distinctive way of understanding and interpreting reality' (Appendix E: p.331) and encourages the learner to knowledge of both his/her own religious heritage as well as of other religions as a way of structuring reality.

4.3.5 Tradition

The necessity of reinterpreting tradition is, perhaps, an expected emphasis in the document given its interactive and contextual understanding of the nature of knowledge. The text suggests that one reclaims by choice the symbols, values and practices from one's tradition that contribute to one's identity, rather than allowing that identity to be determined by unexamined tradition. Thus from a dialectic between the language of a past culture and the world of the contemporary learner emerges '... a new creation of understanding' (Gadamer, 1979:43). The references to tradition throughout the text convey an image of the learners as pilgrim people whose movements forward to a future will avoid absolutising the past and the present.

4.3.6 Personal Freedom and Responsibility

The document leaves no doubt about its position vis-a-vis the dignity and rights of every human person. It establishes that learners have responsibility for the critical judgement and decision making that determine their own values and meaning. The theme of personal responsibility is applied specifically to the need for learners to acquire the data for coming to a personal moral consciousness; to explicate 'their own faith stance' and articulate their own belief structures — all of which will lead towards personal religious and moral maturity.
4.4 Meaning and Significance of Text

A rationale, aims and objectives for the revised course were formulated to respond to the needs expressed by students in the evaluation survey and to reflect more accurately the thinking of the religious education staff who were responsible for the revised course. A selection has been made of four extracts from that section of the document (Appendix E: p.331). These appear to be representative of the text style, attitudes and values that permeate the document. An analysis has been made of these extracts to deconstruct them in order ‘to understand the meaning and significance of what is being communicated through this document’ (Grundy, 1991:4). What follows describes what emerged as the essential meanings and significance of the four representative texts — and hence of the document in general.

Extract No. 1 (Appendix E: p.331).

Human experience leads individuals to raise questions about the ultimate meaning of life and the role of values and beliefs in shaping human responses. A comprehensive education attempts to provide those structured opportunities where some of these questions can be analysed and reflected upon. Education in this sense involves creative and critical encounters with others’ search for meaning, identity and belonging, and also with the phenomenon of religious belief and the various communal and personal expressions of this belief over the centuries. Such encounters bring to bear the perspectives of history, philosophy, theology, sociology, anthropology and psychology on the individual’s personal search and the choices made regarding life’s values.

Meaning and Significance

An inherent assumption in the extract is that human existential experience, is where the individual in partnership with other people finds the agenda for reshaping values and beliefs. To effect this calls for critical reflection that crosses time, space and disciplines to analyse personal and communal reality. The document subscribes to an epistemology, therefore, where meaning is a construction between the individual and the socio-cultural context where it will be
contested, confirmed or negated. It assumes that a critical dialogue gives access to new insights and knowledge and an intentional response within as comprehensive a context as possible. Subjectivity, thus, is seen from Giroux' (1990:85) perspective as 'not a coherent, unitary rational source of self-knowledge but [as] a historical and social construction.'

Extract No. 2 (Appendix E: pp.331-332).

Australian society, like the rest of the world, has in the past two or three decades been subject to many changes. During the same period, in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic church in this country has increasingly come to realise that it is not a timeless and unchangeable community but a pilgrim people sharing the lot of all humankind and involved in a common quest with all who seek to realise the full possibilities of human life. Hitherto unprecedented changes in the world and the church, together with the new theories and approaches that have arisen in the field of education and allied disciplines, have far-reaching implications for the church's understanding of its distinctive educational task.

Meaning and Significance

The recognition in this extract that historical and social factors impinge on the church integrates Christianity into a changing and increasingly pluralistic world where the individual seeks to realise the full possibilities of human life. In such a world tradition will be embedded in experience; it will be lived in present historical circumstances. The extract presumes that church members as pilgrim people in a church, where sociological changes have occurred, will construct a different institutional identity. The document articulates explicitly the impact of political and cultural changes on religious education. The 'new theories' in education hint at a change from a philosophical position of scholasticism, with its established answers, to one that accommodates answers that are socially and culturally conditioned. It thus signals that religious education will have to address new religious and moral questions in a world of change.
Some people, including some Christian educators, find themselves so baffled by the bewildering rate and extent of change that they tend either to retreat to what was considered an unvarying tradition or they accept uncritically the new and untried. An urgent need therefore exists for educators, who have not only the knowledge and skills but also the self-assurance and competence to analyse contemporary developments in such a way as to avoid radical and unreflected resolutions. The ideal religious educator will be capable of making a perceptive, intelligent, responsible and compassionate appraisal of current tensions and transitions in the life of society and the church. He or she will be capable of reflecting on and preserving what is valuable in the past, while responding creatively to the present and preparing the future.

Meaning and Significance

In this extract a religious educator is perceived at the outset as one who will engage in caring, sensitive relationships. As well as this the religious educator is seen as one who has a knowledge of current scholarship in the disciplines that contribute to religious education. The expectation is that the religious educator will have a control of relevant substantive knowledge and be aware of the internal dynamics of how a system operates, or is dysfunctional. The document does not deny the pain for religious educators of working through a situation of doubt, questioning, ambivalence and conviction to arrive at a position that is free from what has been taken-for-granted in the tradition. The challenge is to be creative of change that is at the same time discriminating and inclusive of what is still relevant from tradition. The extract assumes that the need cannot be met unless religious educators are able to critique responsibly their preconceived assumptions about knowledge and forge a synthesis of the old and the new by discerning the meaning of tradition's past and present claims to truth. The curriculum for educating such a religious educator is presented as two-pronged: it must deliver the substantive knowledge and pedagogical skills as well as ensure that the religious educator is equipped to engage in critical reflection. The document targets a hermeneutical understanding of theology and does not encourage the radical.
Extract No. 4 (Appendix E: p.335).

Secondly, questions arise also from the educator's relationship to his or her own religious tradition. A lack of perspective on the future can be overcome by a retrieval of neglected dimensions of the Tradition. At the same time, however, as the Tradition of the religious community challenges the present and enhances the vision of the future, it is itself open to question and critique. While confronting the excesses and distortions of the past may initially cause a certain confusion for the prospective religious educator, it can also be a source of new hope and meaning and thus bring about a heightened awareness of potential falsifications in the present.

Meaning and Significance

The language in this extract reflects the critical discourse in which the course has been constructed. The assumption here is that religious educators who have been socialised into a tradition with ideological elements may experience an alienation and disorienting dilemma when confronted with an inability to interpret the world in terms of its traditional religious symbols and concepts. The challenge to confront fundamental contradictions and engender less alienated understandings can cause a paradigmatic change — a change (Appendix A: p.325) from Stage 3 (conventional) faith and its conformity to objective unexamined facts, to Stage 4 (personal) faith that is committed to critical reflection and the reconstruction of a more internalised, self-chosen faith that is able to handle paradoxes, polarities and tensions. The document assumes that through the power of critical analysis meaning can be reorganised that will generate a visionary consciousness and an expansion of meaning that is at once emancipatory and liberating. In summary this extract can be seen as encapsulating Groome's (1980:186) criteria for critical cognition, namely, critical reason to evaluate the present; critical memory to uncover the past in the present and critical imagination to envision the future in the present.

The selection, from the course document, of the above extracts for analysis, is not meant to imply that they are isolated examples of the philosophic thrust of the course document. Indeed, the writer considers that the extracts that have been
analysed are representative of the liberatory tone of the language of the document and intent of the course. The texts, too, are indicative of the personal, social (ecclesial) and historical agenda of the document and of the social relationships that the course establishes to mediate the construction of knowledge (Lather, 1991:91) through active and critical learning.

4.5 Content Analysis of Course Units

The units of the components of the Graduate Diploma of Education (Religious) have been tabled in Appendix F (p.339). Appendix G (p.340) contains samples of a description of a core unit from each of the two main components of the documents submitted for re-accreditation of the award in 1987. An initial content analysis of all the unit descriptions, and of the unit outlines provided for students enrolled in the units suggested that the most significant data could be organised under twelve concepts which have been listed and described in Figure 8 (pp.163-166) to summarise the focus and orientation each concept gives to the principles that underpin the preparation of

The ideal religious educator [who] will be capable of making a perceptive, intelligent, responsible and compassionate appraisal of current tensions and transitions in the life of society and the church. He or she will be capable of reflecting on and preserving what is valuable in the past, while responding creatively to the present and preparing the future.

(Australian Catholic University, 1987:15).

4.6 Self-Critique: Faculty Review

At a meeting of the members of the School of Religion and Philosophy⁸ to review the nature and content of the Graduate Diploma of Education (Religious), the following item of critique is of interest to this research:

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⁸ The essence of this section has been taken from the convenor's report of the meeting.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONCEPT</th>
<th>FOCUS AND ORIENTATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religion and Culture</strong></td>
<td>Acknowledge:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. human beings are socially and historically interactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. social, cultural, historical, political, educational factors shape personal and institutional ideologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. ways we think and act religiously may no longer make sense in terms of our understandings about who we are in relation to the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. emerging social and cultural issues e.g. women's rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Christianity</strong></td>
<td>Recognise:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. development and transformation of Christianity can be interpreted as an evolving relationship with self and society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. the process of reinterpreting and refashioning knowledge, values and beliefs of Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. the need for critical consciousness of the essential tradition of Christianity and a commitment to shape the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. different ways of viewing Christianity brought about by a pluralism of theologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ecclesiology</strong></td>
<td>Emphasise:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. more participatory emphases of Vatican II characterised by people, not structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. the interaction of the individual and the institution that is necessary to recreate tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. church derives its function from historical context and responds to conditioning forces in history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. church as an ecclesial community whose members are called to examine and respond to issues of social justice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 8:** Analysis and Interpretation of Course Units (Grad.Dip.RE); Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus
CONCEPT | FOCUS AND ORIENTATION
--- | ---
**THE UNIT DESCRIPTIONS AND OUTLINES**

*Argue:*
- for a hermeneutical perspective to save theological language from leading to literalism and irrelevance
- appropriate language emerges with which to name new understandings of faith
- for dialogue between theology and social sciences
- that religious education without theology as a substantive content will be an aberration

*Consider:*
- what was implicit becomes explicit as tradition develops
- tradition must be pruned and grafted to give it life and avoid absolutisation and degeneration
- that if tradition is valued too much in its own right it establishes the objective power of the institution
- individuals must dialogue with the institution to create new insights that interpret community tradition and integrate the old and the new

*Maintain:*
- that through historicity and development doctrine is renewed
- subjective beliefs and values cannot be imprisoned in rigid dogmatic statements
- doctrine must be examined and claimed as one's own

Figure 8: Analysis and Interpretation of Course Units (Grad.Dip.RE); Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus (Cont.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONCEPT</th>
<th>FOCUS AND ORIENTATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Knowledge** | Perceive:  
- knowledge as open-ended, dialogical and grounded in respect for the individual  
- knowledge as not confined to statements of empirical facts  
- knowledge outcomes can be technical, interpretive and critical  
- knowledge as fluid, contextualised and never final |
| **Faith** | Recognise:  
- the need for individuals to develop a critical faith, open to truth  
- the individual assumes responsibility for a personal faith system, life-style, beliefs and commitments  
- that faith becomes progressively more inclusive, discriminating and more integrative as one journeys through life's stages  
- that dissolving and reforming one's faith can cause dissonance and conflict |
| **Learning** | Acknowledges:  
- process must be broad enough to be related to both the discourse of education and the discourse of religion  
- learning can integrate the personal, interpersonal and political aspects of the learner's worldview  
- individual learners are capable of change and free to act on the world  
- parallels in discourses of adult development and adult learning |

Figure 8: Analysis and Interpretation of Course Units (Grad.Dip.RE); Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus (Cont.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONCEPT</th>
<th>FOCUS AND ORIENTATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious Education: Nature</td>
<td>Present:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Purpose</td>
<td>. the nature and purpose of religious education with theoretical, linguistic and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>conceptual clarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. religious education as a combination of an intentional education base and faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>concerns of a particular community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. religious education with a history that is refashioned and renewed in the changing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ecclesial and historical circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. religious education as a field of study, ideas, methods, concepts and research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Education: Content</td>
<td>Stress:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Strategies</td>
<td>. the best current understandings of theology and scripture must be made available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. the use of teaching and learning strategies that facilitate enquiry and reconstruct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. stepping beyond the boundaries of content and experiences that are Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Education: Methodology</td>
<td>Promote:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. praxis epistemology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. modern critical methods of interpretation of scripture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8: Analysis and Interpretation of Course Units (Grad.Dip.RE); Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus (Cont.)
the language used to summarise what is 'essential for inquiring, well-informed and competent religious educators' contains a mixture of what might be distinguished as more objective academic needs for growth in understanding (Appendix E: pp.335-336#1,2,3,9)\(^9\) as well as more subjective needs for growth in a personally articulated faith and spirituality (Appendix E: p.331 #4, 6).

As presently expressed and implemented in the unit outlines the course could be described as emphasising the objective, academic dimension. The academic dimension is demonstrated in the aims that stress *critical reflection* (#1) and *critical understanding* (#2). The personal dimension is reflected, for example, in the stress (#6) on the commitment of the religious educators to the pursuit of truth. The above issue raises questions about the students' expectations of the course in regard to content, learning experiences and assignments *vis-a-vis* academic and personal outcomes. Is the Graduate Diploma of Education (Religious) educating people for a *ministry* as religious educators in Catholic schools, with all that this implies, or merely as classroom teachers with a sound grasp of content and methodology?

The question raised at the meeting will be pursued at faculty meetings during the academic year (1995). The researcher expects that the results of this study will contribute significant information when the questions are addressed.

### 4.7 Overview

The overall scope and purpose of the graduate diploma course offered by the Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus can be acknowledged, from its documentation, as recognising that teaching has a knowledge base that is changing and that professional development and growth occur on a continuum throughout a

\(^9\) # denotes aims as numbered on pp.335-336.
teacher's career. The components of the course structure are designed to help students to effect a personal synthesis of knowledge from cognate fields such as theology, education and professional ethics. In contrast to earlier images of the teacher in Catholic schools there is, implicit in the purpose and goal of the course of the Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus, the image of the teacher as a professional with a need for intellectual rigour.

The scope of the course aims to develop in teachers the ability to describe, explore and reflect on data that identify the field and to develop judgements and skills to improve their professional performance. The graduate nature of the course also reinforces the position of the Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus that continued education should relate to a teacher’s experience and career structure. Although the course was generated, in part, by the demand of employers for more highly qualified staff the status of the university as a higher education institution gives the Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus a necessary academic independence. It is not seen as an employing agency and this allows students to engage in learning that addresses their own needs, and to move towards a mature stage of critical self awareness and bring to consciousness influences which are taken-for-granted. The document of the Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus refers repeatedly to engaging students in critical self-awareness to enable them 'to exercise some control over the future by reflecting on and preserving what is valuable from the past and responding creatively to the present' (Australian Catholic University, 1987:22).

5.0 SUMMARY AND SIGNIFICANCE FOR THESIS

Ongoing professional development has become mandatory if teachers want to adjust to a new role and demonstrate an ability to respond to change. The process of professional development is one of growth in competence and maturity in the depth of personal and professional knowledge and understanding. If professional development is an exercise of bureaucratic control it will serve an
institution's needs for knowledge that it can manage and control. This knowledge, however, is diametrically opposed to knowledge that aims at genuine self-understanding and emancipatory knowledge. The conceptual possibility for critical professional development will be one in which the cognitive interests of the learner give direction to the epistemological orientation of the activity.

Both the national reports and the documents of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn have given an impetus to professional development. From one perspective the national reports disclose assumptions that are hegemonic. Their emphasis on structures and accountability could attract candidates oriented towards conservatism. On the positive side the national reports have recognised and given voice to the need for changes in education in terms of the social, moral and ethical factors that impact upon it.

The Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn has likewise given voice, in a plethora of documents, before and since 1989, to the impact of social, moral and ethical factors on the changes in religious education. It has set in motion a process and intervention strategies to support professional development. This has created an awareness in teachers of the gap to be filled and has encouraged them 'to take a step away from being an unknowing reactor towards that of an autonomous actor' (Macklin, 1981:32). However, the importance accorded in the documents of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn to qualifications in religious education as a criterion for promotion creates a risk of producing religious educators with a propensity to accept the authority and the objective power of the institution.

Some analysis was made of extracts from the document prepared by the Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus for the reaccreditation of the Graduate Diploma in Education (Religious). The text indicated that the course has been mounted in the light of changes of personal, social and ecclesial needs. Its language is liberatory: it aims to engage students in critical self-awareness and bring to consciousness influences that are taken-for-granted in order to enable religious educators 'to exercise some control over the future by reflecting on and
preserving what is valuable from the past and responding creatively to the present’ (Australian Catholic University, 1987:22).

It seems that the context for the development of religious educators, established by policies and courses, provides a reasonable base for a critical professional development that will enable teachers to grow intellectually, to challenge taken-for-granted knowledge and to take emancipatory action.