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Abstract In 2008 the Minister for National Education accepted the new *Basis for General Education*, which caused that a revision of the *Basis for the Curriculum of Catechesis* was necessary. In the amended form it was approved of by the Conference of the Episcopate of Poland in March 2010. This fact issues a challenge for catechists and handbook authors to reflect on the existing teaching aids. It is an opportunity to undertake both an in-depth theoretical analysis and empirical studies of the handbooks.

Basically, studies of a handbook may be conducted in two planes: theoretical and empirical. The former one, basic in the study procedure, allows a confrontation of the features of the handbook with the assumed theoretical model, which makes it possible to provisionally assess it. The analysis is concerned with the assessment of the choice and correctness of its contents; with the definition of its aim and function, correctness of its structure, its conformity with the curriculum, methodical approach, and the quality of its layout. In empirical studies it is important to study the teaching and learning effects being the result of the use of the chosen handbook or its elements. Also, the effects may be compared of the use of several handbooks, or the teaching – learning effects without using them, or a comparison may be made of the effects of the use of other teaching aids.

The basic question is: what to study and how to study it. The answer to the former of these questions is the object of studies that is characteristic from the didactic point of view. The answer to the latter one is concerned with study methods and tools useful in verification of handbooks.