



Committee for
UNIVERSITY TEACHING and STAFF DEVELOPMENT

FINAL REPORT FOR A 1998 NATIONAL TEACHING DEVELOPMENT GRANT
(INDIVIDUAL)

IDENTIFICATION

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Project Title

Exploration of 25 years of religious education - CD-ROM

10 Key words or phrases that describe the project

Development of a resource bank of textual material on CD-ROM

Makes readily available a wide range of historically relevant materials

Provides a Catholic perspective on 25 years of RE in Australia

Provides interconnections between various documents and models of religious education

Allows for comparison of approaches to religious education adopted in the 28 Catholic dioceses/archdiocese of Australia throughout the past 25 years

Research and learning tool for postgraduate students and for staff of Catholic Education Offices

Executive Summary

CDROM 25 years of religious education in Australia: a Catholic perspective

Developer: Associate Professor Patricia Malone, Australian Catholic University

Objectives of the Project

The aim of the project has been to develop a CD-ROM with appropriate links to web sites, in order to provide access to materials representing the development and implementation of Catholic religious education curriculum in Australia in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. This material has been organised in a readily accessible format to promote a critical analysis of materials within the Australian context and to become the basis of modules within Masters units.

Description of the Project

This project has involved the development of a CDROM as a learning resource. It contains material representative of the various dioceses, periods of history and the policies and practices of Catholic religious education of the period under study. Religious education in the Catholic system is the responsibility of Bishop/Archbishop in the 28 dioceses/archdioceses and there is a large amount of diverse material mandated for use in the schools. After negotiation with the dioceses samples have been scanned and organised on a CDROM and linked, where appropriate, to web sites that provide further detail or examples. Critically reflective articles and conference papers have been placed in the various sections of the CDROM to assist the students in their contextualisation and analysis of the sample curriculum materials. Modules of learning in specific courses offered by the School of Religious Education of Australian Catholic University are in the process of being linked to this resource. This will promote accessibility to relevant material and enable a higher degree of independent learning.

Learning Outcomes

Through the use of this CDROM in various units students will have the opportunity to:

- access a range of important source materials in religious education
- integrate and make stronger links between theory and practice
- critically analyse the assumptions inherent in various religious education programs through a detailed study of a range of materials
- explore the relationships between religious, cultural and educational changes and their implications for religious education
- develop independent learning skills and acquire confidence in navigating through computer assisted learning package
- achieve the outcomes of several units in the Masters of Religious Education course by completing specific learning and assessment modules.

Student Learnings

Australian Catholic University offers its postgraduate courses in Religious Education on five of its campuses and in special regional centres in every state and territory. This CDROM will provide all students with access to a range of materials that can promote critical, independent learning. It can extend the horizons of local lecturers and students and promote a greater sense of Australian identity in the field of religious education.

Final Report

Exploration of 25 years of religious education - CD-ROM

Introduction

This project had been designed to meet a specific learning problem in the area of religious education as presented in postgraduate courses in Australian Catholic University. Courses are presented in every part of the country, on campuses of the University and in other settings where there is limited access to libraries. These courses aim to prepare reflective practitioners who need to access and critically analyse material representative of all sections of the country and a range of time. There was no one collection of such material. Many lecturers had access to only limited samples and were not aware of the interconnections between the developments of curriculum materials in the various states.

Initially it had been intended to link the print material to a series of video clips but it became obvious that the print materials needed to be provided first and that a later project would be the development of such video materials. Many interviews were videoed and this material will be edited for later trialing and will provide a supplementary resource in the future. The CDROM has been linked to the web pages of the School of Religious Education, which already provide a number of articles and other links and will enable updates to be provided to users of the CDROM over time.

Justification and Educational Rationale

Australian Catholic University is unique in its provision of courses in religious education in so many different states and territories and in its networking with so many different employing bodies. The development of the resource has already promoted a great deal of professional discussion between religious education personnel of the various Catholic Education Offices and the staff of Australian Catholic University. It also assisting the process of the development of one School of religious education, which only came into being in 1999 as part of University restructuring. Members of staff are now offering postgraduate units in more than one state and need access to examples that are appropriate to specific locations.

The University and the Faculty of Education have set as priorities for the next stage of their development an emphasis on a learning paradigm. Independent learning and the provision of courses in flexible modes of delivery require access to source material and there was no overall source of Australian RE curriculum, policy or practice material. In the 'Documents Section' of the CDROM some study/ reflective questions were provided but in general the CDROM is a resource of materials which can be accessed in different ways for specific purposes by a range of users. The diagram at the conclusion of this report sets out the organisational structure of the CDROM and some possible pathways into the material to access information.

The development of this first CDROM is only the first phase of an ongoing process. Further work is needed to progressively develop modules of learning in specific units that will assist students in a critical analysis of the material provided. The development of a supplementary video will enhance the level of student interaction with the material. The School of Religious Education has already had one workshop session on the material. The review takes place later this year of the postgraduate courses of the School and during this review more specific links

will be developed with the existing CDROM. Other materials will be added to the UPDATE section of the School's web site as they become available or are needed for new units.

Target Student Groups

In 1999 954 students studied postgraduate courses in religious education offered by Australian Catholic University throughout Australia and New Zealand and approximately a third of these would be completing units that would be using this resource.. Staff from the various Catholic Education Offices would also access the CDROM for professional development and inservice groups, which could involve hundreds in any given year. It is proposed to make the CDROM available to the CEOs who were involved in providing material for the resource.

Technical soundness

The original concept of the CDROM had to be modified several times. The technical officer who had been involved in the planning of the project left at the beginning of 1988 and was not replaced so that casual staff had to be found to carry out the different phases of the project. Two of the academic staff who had agreed to work on the project left during 1998/9 and as they were not replaced most of the detailed work was left to the project leader. In 1998 she had a double administrative role and a period of sick leave so that the project had to be carried over into 1999 and adjusted to meet the changing needs of the School of RE and the revised units. There was a further delay in commencing the project, as no money was available for several months because of administrative problems linked with a change of vice-chancellor.

The planning had not allowed for such a number of changes of personnel and as the selection of material required a number of value judgments there were only limited number of staff with sufficient knowledge of the period to assist the project leader. Associate Professor Graham Rossiter who became Head of the School of RE in 1999 was the only permanent member of staff who regularly worked with the project leader and his time was limited. All of the 28 CEOs needed to be contacted for copyright permission and for advice as to material to be included. In some cases changes in staff or policy or development of new programs during the period required changes to samples of material being scanned. The time involved in all of the above led to the major change in the plan to prepare text only material and leave the videoed interviews to a later resource.

The final product is still a very important resource and has the potential to make source material available to a large number of students and lecturers. The very juxtaposition of different policy statements on issues such as accreditation policies ensures that the researcher and student is able to identify changing issues that are part of the contextual changes of the period.

Administrative Convenience

At all times the School of Religious Education and, in particular the Cardinal Clancy Centre for Research in the Spiritual, Moral, Religious and Pastoral Dimensions of Education, supported the project and saw it as part of its strategic plan. Administrative and technical staff involved in this project, worked with the project leader within the Clancy Centre using the equipment it provided. We interacted with staff involved on allied projects such as the development of a data base on research in RE in Australia and the cataloguing of archives of curriculum materials.

Reports on the progress of the project were presented to the total staff of the School in their biennial meetings each year.

Organisational Acceptance

The development of the courses of the School of Religious Education and the Review to take place in 2000/1 as well as its movement towards providing Masters Courses on line will ensure that the resource is integrated into the units of the program. Reports have been made to School of Religious Education, the Faculty Board Committee on Postgraduate Education and Community Outreach and to Religious Education and Curriculum committees of dioceses of Broken Bay and of Parramatta. The Project Leader has had the role since 1999 of Chair of the Faculty Postgraduate Review Committee and although this has limited availability of time for the development of the resource it will assist in the ongoing implementation phase of the project.

Evaluation procedures

During the preparation and implementation of this project the project reference group met regularly to examine the process and suggest modifications and improvements in response to the changing reality.

In 1999 while the CDROM was being developed a section of the material on Catholic Education was placed on a web site for a unit being studied by 200 final year BED and Grad Dip Ed students. The quality of their presentations, both oral and written, gave evidence of a higher level of interaction with original source materials than in previous years. Their evaluations were very positive as they found the accessibility of the materials without dependence on lecturers or need to access a range of library sources promoted a higher level of critical reflection which was noted by all the tutors involved.

During Semester 1 the project developer will be integrating a module of work based on use of this resource in a unit called *Cultural Contexts of Religious Education*. It will also be integrated into a core unit in the EDD program *Contemporary Issues in Education*. It will provide these students with an opportunity to critically compare some of the developments in religious education within the framework of social, cultural and educational changes in Australia during the period under study. Ongoing evaluation of the students' use of the resource will lead to changes in the modules of work and in the addition of other material to the UPDATE section on the web site of the School of Religious Education.

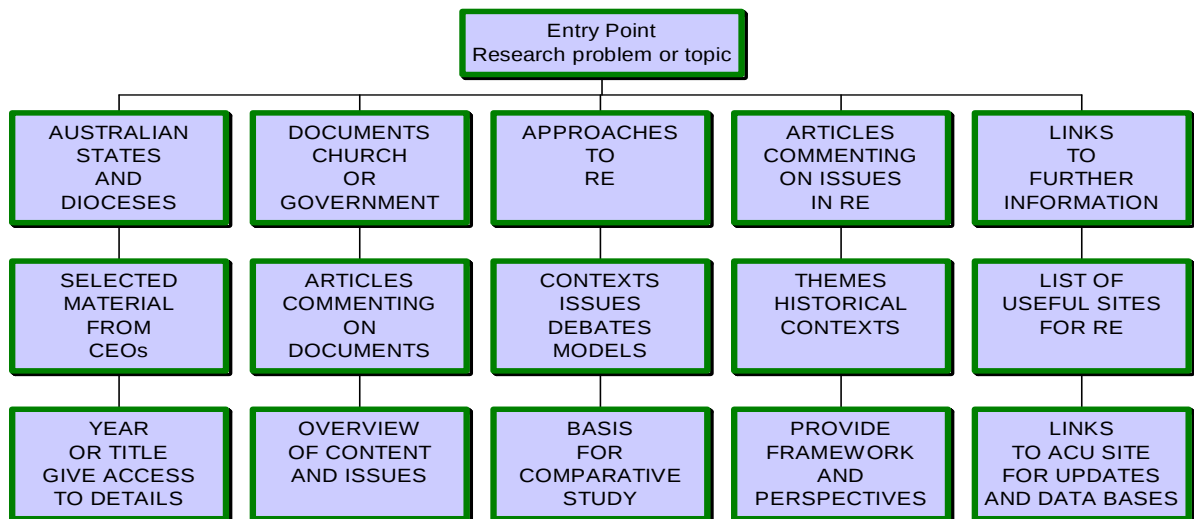
Other evaluation will take the form of monitoring changes in understanding and skills of various groups as they use the resource in their units. Such evaluations are administered each time a unit is offered and can therefore be used to monitor changes influenced in part by this project. As well as the formal written evaluations regular interviews with staff and students will provide information on how effective the resource is in achieving the designated learning outcomes. As this project involves a change in learning paradigm it will become more obvious over time the extent to which this resource contributes to such a change.

Dissemination of the project

A paper on the project *Researching a Living Past* was presented at the annual conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education in Adelaide in December, 1998. It analysed the process used in developing the CDROM and its objectives. It also considered the issues raised by a comparison of sacramental programs throughout the period, and thus demonstrated one research use of the resource material. The first draft of the resource was placed on the web

site of the Cardinal Clancy Centre and all CEO staff were asked to examine the material and comment on the accuracy and quality of the material. Very positive feedback was provided from many of these. Ongoing reports have been made as noted above to various groups of ACU staff. A seminar presentation will be made in 2000 to staff and student colloquium at ACU. A presentation of the resource will also be made at the International Seminar of Religious Education and Values at which the project leader will be a keynote speaker in Jerusalem in July, 2000.

Sample Pathways into the CDROM



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Appendix 1

Acknowledgments

A task of this size has depended on the assistance of many people and I would like to acknowledge their assistance.

The development of this CDROM would not have been possible without the National Teaching Development Grant awarded to me by the Committee for University Teaching and Staff Development (CUTSD) in 1998 which I was allowed to carry over into 1999. Australian Catholic University and particularly the Cardinal Clancy Centre for Research in the Spiritual, Moral, Religious and Pastoral Dimensions of Education provided the facilities and equipment used in the development of this CDROM.

In particular I would like to thank the Catholic Education Offices who graciously gave copyright permission for excerpts of their material to be placed in the resource. Every care was taken to check material with them and to ask them to check a draft copy of the resource that was placed on the University web site for a time. If through human oversight there has been some error in regard to this everything possible will be done to rectify it in future printings.

I would like to thank the various people I interviewed in 1997 in preparation for this task and even though the video excerpts have not been able to be included in this CDROM it is hoped to develop an associated video at a later stage. I would thank in particular Professor Brian Hill of Murdoch University WA, Sr Eileen Lenihan rsj of Notre Dame University; Sr Eleanor Carter and teachers and staff attending inservice in WA and SA. I also acknowledge the interviews with Professor Robert Crotty and staff of University of South Australia and Rev Tony Densley of Adelaide CEO. There was also a series of interviews with the members of Queensland Catholic Education Commission, Mr Damien Brennan and Mr Graeme Barry of the Catholic Education Office of Brisbane and the RE Directors of the Catholic Education Offices of NSW. The national executive of the Australian Association of Religious Education also offered their perspective I also thank the Editorial Committee of the *Journal of Religious Education: Word in Life* and the *Religious Education Journal of Australia* who gave permission for articles from these publications to be copied. Other journals and professional associations gave permission for the establishment of links to their sites.

I would like to thank the staff of the School of Religious Education in ACU and particularly the Head of School, Associate Professor Graham Rossiter for their assistance and ongoing support and encouragement. The administrative staff, in particular Mrs Lillian Budwee and Miss Adele Smith, have often provided professional assistance.

Mr Andrew Graham has carried out the technical development of this CDROM in the main and I would like to express my appreciation to him for his attention to detail and creative efforts in the preparation of the material. In the planning stages I also wish to acknowledge the assistance of Miss Nuala Coogan, Mr Des Matejka, Mr Martin Maguire and Mr Scott Mazzuchelli. In the preparation of material and research at different stages of the project I would like to acknowledge Sr Colleen O'Sullivan rsj, Sr Anne Forbes rsm Brother Peter Downs cfc and Mrs Carolyn Noyes.

Finally I would like to acknowledge the students and staff I have worked with over the past 30 years who have all contributed to my understanding of the field of religious education and therefore to the content of this CDROM. The members of my family and my religious congregation have always supported me in my ongoing search for understanding in the field of religious education and challenged me in the development of this resource.

Appendix 2

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