ACU National’s programs in educational leadership, Catholic both in content and approach, continue to gain favour with international educators.

The University has collaborated with the Diocese of Mauritius since 1998, providing Master of Educational Leadership courses tailored to local needs. It has also assisted the Divine Word University in Madang, Papua New Guinea, to provide appropriate educational leadership programs, and contributes in New Zealand and East Timor.

“There is a particular quality to Catholic education,” says Head of the School of Educational Leadership Associate Professor Michael Bezzina.

“It links into the structures, traditions and essential mission of the church, and is committed to bringing faith and life into harmony. Catholic education is motivated by hope, and, among other things, it takes a strong stance on social justice.”

For leaders the implications are widespread. Not only is there a commitment to valuing students equally and giving them equal opportunities, but teaching colleagues are also valued equally.

“It is about the respect that is owed to people,” Associate Professor Bezzina explained. “Because we are created by God, we are all equal, regardless of our roles, and we should respect people equally. We should therefore advocate models of leadership which are collaborative, rather than autocratic.”

This collaborative approach is reflected in the way the School of Educational Leadership works. Rather than imposing a curriculum upon a community, the School works with diverse communities to address their own particular challenges.

In Australia, for example, enrolment policies and the identifying features of Catholic schools are currently challenging Catholic school leaders. In Mauritius, however, the focus is on dealing with diversity as wealthy schools become more inclusive of children with Creole and other ethnic backgrounds, many of whom are disadvantaged.

Courses such as Leadership and Spirituality, Faith Leadership and Leading a Catholic School are adapted for local circumstances.

“The reason our international collaborators in educational leadership come to us is that we don’t just impose a pre-packaged business model of leadership,” Associate Professor Bezzina said.

“We engage in dialogue with them, exploring their needs and adapting our programs accordingly.

“The kinds of things we teach, and the perspectives we teach from, are very clearly grounded in our Catholicity.”

The benefits are mutually enriching. “Our collaborators provide us with different perspectives. They challenge us to consider some of the unspoken assumptions on which we operate.”

“Catholic education is motivated by hope, and, among other things, it takes a strong stance on social justice.”

Education, respect and leadership on the world stage