Enhancing Instruction in the Global Context

A Challenge for the Resource Center for Applied Studies in Distance Education (Cærenad)

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ABSTRACT. In this article, I examine the Cærenad virtual center, a consortium of distance-teaching institutions, which mirrors Elaine Winters' (1996) ‘Global Village’. In this kind of partnership, intercultural communication is put to the greatest test of all, as cultural, linguistic, institutional and geographical differences become the challenge that Distance Education (DE) technology must overcome. In this global context, instruction is enhanced by the conveniences of DE and the potential for IT to help bridge the knowledge gap. Most of the international development projects initiated and financed by the North hardly meet the real needs of the South, nor do they help these countries to get out of their poverty and paralysing illiteracy. The Cærenad project, a truly North-South joint effort shows that it is possible to deal with these problems in a different way. However, the challenges encountered in its set-up and implementation phases are a painful reminder of the difficulty of changing ingrained institutional culture, largely traceable to colonial history and practice.

KEYWORDS: Distance Education, Global Village, Enhanced Instruction, Consortia, Cærenad, Cross-cultural Communication.

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Introduction

Communication between cultures has been a common phenomenon as peoples from different parts of the world come into contact for war, peace, trade or simply for immigration purposes. With the current trends in globalisation (King, 1993; Winters, 1996) and the need to formalise transactions, the benefits of learning how other cultures work are becoming more and more evident. Schools and managers of international consortia are at the forefront of ensuring that cultural differences do not become a hindrance to the exchange of ideas, the sharing of resources or the free movement of people from one part of the world to the other. A demonstration of the difficulties and benefits of intercultural communication strategies will contribute towards current efforts of making the world a global village (King, 1993). We look at communication between members of a consortium of six countries—Canada, Brazil, Mauritius, Senegal, Costa Rica and Chile—to see how differences in culture and language are managed during the set-up phase of a shared distance education centre, Cærenad.

Cærenad is a distance education consortium comprised of six institutions from six countries, with an ingenious and ambitious plan to create a resource centre for applying and studying distance learning. This multinational, multicultural and multilingual endeavour faces the ultimate challenge of intercultural communication (Cooks, 2001) whereby an awareness of the differences between partners must be weighted against the need to coexist as a unified centre. Although the culling together of varying institutional cultures from six geographical locations is innovative and challenging, the general framework for its success is founded on tested practice and experience at the pragmatic, philosophical and theoretical levels.

Through the interactions of partner-institutions at various levels of collaboration, we revisit communication strategy, intercultural communication efforts, verbal and non-verbal communication incidents, cultural contact and emanating differences and similarities, as well as the challenges of cultural identification and intercultural mediation. We hope to draw attention to the fact that intercultural communication in both a global and institutional set-up requires mastery based on a willingness to work out strategies for its implementation. Cærenad is a good test case for validating this assumption; it provides us with a solid empirical stack of daunting data that can help us draw some very useful conclusions.

Cærenad: the Test Case

The idea for creating a resource centre for applied studies in distance learning was initiated by a reputed Francophone Canadian Distance Education University—Télulq. This institution of Higher Learning has had a long standing international experience in training distance education trainers in Africa, the Indian Ocean region and Latin America. The new centre is a unique opportunity for consolidating that
experience by culling together both expertise and resources to enable partners to improve their teaching and research in distance education, first on three continents and six countries and later, throughout the world. The challenges of such an endeavour are self-evident: geographical distance, differences in educational systems, cultures and languages. How knowledge is exchanged fruitfully and meaningfully in this set-up, is the object of this paper.

**Communication Strategy**

We consider, for the purposes of this presentation, that communication embodies the exchange of shared knowledge or of wisdom conceived under a specific cultural matrix. To talk of communication between cultures is in fact stating the obvious! Often, it is the degree of closeness between interlocutors that amplifies or minimises the notion of “difference” along with that of “interculturalness”. One can postulate, on the basis of long-standing assumptions about MAN as a “social being” (DeCasper *and al.*, 1980; DeCasper *and al.*, 1986), that human language was born of the necessity to communicate with others as deeply and as far as the need to share knowledge and understanding would warrant at any given point and time during social intercourse. Instinctively or biologically, signs and gesture guided by context often take the lead in human interaction. Language is a learned “behaviour”1 (Feyereisen, *and al.*, 1991; Narasimham, 1998) whose object of apprenticeship is verbalisation and gesture (Lieberman, 1991). Such so-called “apprenticeship” in the psycho-cultural sense, is the basis of a theory of intercultural exchange based on verbal and non-verbal communication. That one must communicate anything requires that that person have a receptor (potential or real) to respond to a message based on a culturally generated response or interpretation of one’s real or virtual environment (Rodseth *and al.*, 1991). Without formal tutoring, a child learns to recognise key elements of its cultural environment, first instinctively as a survival strategy, and then adaptively as means to share with or integrate into society later in life (Narasimham, 1998). This is where verbal and non-verbal behaviour begins to benefit from linguistic systems and other communication codes to generate a shared cultural matrix we could call language X, language Y or language Z—French, English or Spanish, for example. If we think of language as learned behaviour, we can then postulate that communication, of the verbal and non-verbal types, is a culturally generated phenomenon that helps make sense of cognitive desires and intentions among human beings of the same speech or linguistic community, of the same geographical location, of the same race, of the same sex, of the same profession, of the same religion, and so on (Rogers, 1999). From the individual’s cognitive desire to express or represent an idea using words, gesture or drawing,

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1. Narasimhan, 1998, points out that “Language behaviour is regarded as a species-specific characteristic of human beings, the acquisition of which requires no special tutoring”, adding that “first language acquisition by children is not a grammatical issue in the linguistic sense but primarily a behavioural one in the psychological sense”. 

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comes the need to symbolize thought in ways that other species do not\(^2\) (Deacon, 1997). These premises will help us later to better relate to the challenges of intercultural communication among the partners of Cærenad.

**Intercultural Communication Efforts**

Like the genesis of a speech community (Ikome, 1996), cultural communities take shape when individually divergent needs are transformed into socially convergent needs. A particular culture is said to grow out of the defining characteristics of individuals whose needs are negotiated, through contact and a willingness to share, by an emerging community through socialisation. Although individual needs may be different, when they are put together and examined, community members will realise how much they share in common and how far sharing can make scarce knowledge and resources to become more available to all members of that community. To illustrate the nature of real-life challenges of communicating across cultures, I use one educational pilot project from several ongoing activities of the Cærenad consortium: an introductory multinational course on intercultural communication.

From the outset, Canada, Senegal and Mauritius—three countries separated by great distances—agreed to work on one Cærenad project: the production of an undergraduate course in intercultural communication. The project is in itself a test of how differences in institutional, educational and linguistic cultures could be managed with the successful delivery of a sufficiently international course that can be used by each of the partners in their different University undergraduate programmes. Goodwill and political correctness conceal the magnitude of intercultural communication efforts each University representative had to make, to get the job done. Some facts need to be noted here: Télé-université is one of a network of Universities of Université du Québec in Canada, specialised in distance education; École normale supérieure is a teacher-training faculty of education of Université Sheik Anta Diop, in Senegal; University of Mauritius has just recently added distance education (The J. Baguant Distance Learning Centre) to its undergraduate extension programme in Mauritius (Honoré-Hortalle, 1999).

The main language of instruction at Télé-université is French, although its North American educational model and its geographical location warrant some limited use of English in research and public relations. ENS uses only French and maintains a French educational model which is unlike the course-credit system in Canada. Mauritius is one of the rare countries which is truly bilingual and functions officially in English and French in government and in school. To minimise intercultural differences, the three partners agreed to use French as the language of communication. As we will see later, with one potential handicap removed, a series

of others remained, but dealing with them as they came up became the central challenge for the team. The results and analyses of a questionnaire aimed at studying the actual intercultural perceptions and experiences of participants in the Cærenad project, revealed some of the underlying challenges the three-member team had to deal with to get the course produced. We focus on the outcome of the inquiry into the communication strategies used to get some of the Centre’s projects (such as the ICC course) up and running.

A qualitative nine-point questionnaire was submitted to 40 Cærenad participants: 20 in Canada, 8 in Mauritius and 12 in Senegal. They all provided answers either through oral interviews, or email submissions or hand-written texts. The hand-written responses were less complete due to difficulties in reading various handwritings; the electronically emailed responses were generally more detailed as respondents took their time to key in their beliefs; the oral responses from video-taped interviews were more elaborate as it was possible for the interviewer to verify responses by re-asking questions differently a second time. In all three cases, however, the diverging and converging elements between respondents seemed to be similar for all three countries. We present some very telling samples from verbal and non-verbal communication incidents reported by some respondents.

**Verbal and Non Verbal Communication Incidents**

Aside from the occasional bilingual or trilingual who would usually be conversant with the strategies for using two or three languages, a majority of the respondents pointed out the distracting aspects of managing bilingual or trilingual communication during face-to-face work sessions, and worse still during audio- and videoconferencing. The problem can be identified at two different levels: the Centre has not provided adequate second language training for its key members; translation and interpretation services are either poorly organised or simply inadequate. Here are the reactions by some respondents to the issue of inter-lingual communication [my translations from French]:

“Linguistic differences slow down the communication and production process; they act like a barrier and could also be the source of misunderstanding. I suspect that for some colleagues […], the situation is even worse considering the amount of correspondence sent out to Cærenad members preponderantly in French.” “It may be wise to allow or encourage the use of a neutral language other than French or Spanish when a majority of the members are comfortable doing so. English is a good example”. “In non formal activities, two blocks are usually spontaneously created with Francophones on one side and Hispanophones on the other.”

These comments reflect a serious intercultural communication problem that is managed haphazardly by the decision-makers of the program, who chose to use ad hoc and cost-saving strategies with the hope that participants will get used to the unsatisfactory way of holding meetings and work sessions in two or more languages.
The questionnaire yielded more than just complaints or criticism; concrete solutions were suggested with the hope that there will be some change of strategy well before the end of the set-up phase of the programme. Below are some proposals relating to second language training and translation and interpretation services.

**Second Language Training for Cærenad Participants**

Respondents underlined the need to increase and encourage the training of Cærenad participants in the languages and cultures of their counterparts. This training, they pointed out, need not be formal as it can be integrated as parts of the numerous projects partners are expected to complete as multinational and multilingual teams. Such an effort, they presume, will increase the level, quality and number of communicational interactions between members working on different Cærenad teams. Concrete proposals in this regard include organising internships between partner institutions; holding more face-to-face meetings for those working on critical on-going projects; sharing more audio-visual materials such as documentary-type videos with sub-titles between work groups; falling back on an international *lingua franca*\(^3\) such as English, when necessary.

**Translation and Interpretation Services**

It would appear from the facts gathered through the questionnaire that no master plan was envisaged for communicating in the three or four languages spoken in the six-member countries of Cærenad. A hierarchy of power and privilege seemed to govern the imposition of French and Spanish over English and Portuguese. Some intercultural mediation experts (Cooks, 2001; Rogers, 1999) would suggest that a policy of active involvement in the interests of all the partners concerned would have prevented the appearance of inequality or bias in the choices made regarding the use of certain languages over the others. Kalpana Das\(^4\) believes that even the idea of a neutral language does not mediate the mitigating issues raised by the absence of linguistic harmony in this multinational endeavour. For her, ‘neutrality’ constitutes an absence of ‘involvement’, and any mediator worthy of that title cannot afford *not* to be ‘involved’. One can deduce from her stand that Cærenad is a good intercultural forum for simulating the resolution of the complex problem of interlingual communication. First of all the languages must be treated equally; secondly, language should be used as an ice-breaking tool for interest in the culture and knowledge base of each counterpart; thirdly, language should be used as an excuse

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3. *A lingua franca* is a language used as a common or commercial tongue among speakers of different languages.

4. Reference is made here to a video-recorded interview of Kalpana Das, the Director of the Montreal Cultural Institute, who was a contributing consultant in the production of the Cærenad-sponsored course on Intercultural communication alluded to in this paper.
for listening and learning what people from different cultures have to say: we often listen when we do not know and talk too much when we think we know it all! As its stands, respondents deplore the choices that have been made to handle the multilingual nature of Cærenad: minimal translation of written documents and unsatisfactory interpretation of verbal exchanges. We review their observations below.

Written Documents

Respondents were not happy with the wasted time and efforts put into personally trying to translate emailed messages in a language that they hardly know or do not know at all. Using bilingual dictionaries, automatic translation on the Internet or, worse still, turning to a colleague who may know the language better, simply produces results ranging from miscommunication to approximating information. They would like to see a reliable document translation service which will ensure that exchanged information is accurate.

Verbal Exchange

Using their experiences during audio- and videoconferencing (and less so during face-to-face meetings), many respondents identify similar problems although they do not all seem to know how to resolve them. Simultaneous translation seriously slowed down meetings which ended up taking longer to complete. As a result, the quality of the exchanges was often significantly compromised. Of the very few suggestions made to alleviate the situation, some respondents strongly suggested that meetings requiring the services of a translator be better prepared in advance; presenters must be conscious of the fact that they are being translated; translators must be briefed before hand on the discussion points and should even encourage the persons they will be translating to maintain an appropriate delivery rhythm and they could even ask for notes on the topic to be presented well before the meeting begins.

Challenges of Cultural Identification and Intercultural Mediation

As we pointed out in the general introduction, the term “culture” is not always understood by everyone in the same manner. Using questions from the questionnaire that touch on the notion of “culture”, many respondents took the liberty to express their opinion as to how they would define the term, especially in the light of the intercultural experience they were all having as they participated in a variety of Cærenad projects. Their perception of culture had a direct impact on how they interacted with Cærenad members from different cultural backgrounds. Rogers (Rogers, 1999), in his conception of culture, includes differences based on race, class, age, gender, etc., as they are catalogued within a nation, but he nevertheless focuses on “differences”. The inevitable notion of “difference” in cultural studies should not always be associated with negative connotations; it must instead be the
basis for mutual exchange in a world full of differences where, as Leda Cooks (Cooks, 2001) sees it, respect, ethics and responsibility facilitate intercultural communication.

In a multinational consortium such as Cærenad, the way “difference” is handled will determine the extent to which partners succeed in creating a mutually beneficial work environment—an environment in which the contribution of each partner is considered to be an asset instead of a burden, enriching instead of impoverishing. While some of these positive aspects of intercultural difference (Good, 1996; Gudykunst, 1984) seem to have been integrated in Cærenad activities, it did not happen automatically given that the putting together of this partnership is a learning and innovative exercise. From the responses to the questionnaire, we noticed that the administrators of the project have gone out of their way to nurse the wounds of cultural difference so that both victims and perpetrators can realise the benefits of learning from one another, sometimes through the hard way (Huntington, 1997).

Instruction, at all times, requires a wide range of sensitivities to learners, as cultural sensitivity to individuals and groups, in particular, remains an underlying parameter for successful transmission of knowledge, especially a culturally more diverse cultural context such as the “Global Village” (Ikome, 2000; King, 1993). To better understand why many respondents felt uncomfortable talking about cultural differences, let’s examine some respondents’ comments under the following categories: misunderstanding, pre-judging and stereotyping. Here’s a paradox from a respondent’s comments that will help us set the stage for the ensuing analysis:

“Cultural differences actually led participants to listen a lot more, to be more aware and open to others, to the extent that work on the projects was slowed down considerably although, paradoxically, it was more solidly and realistically grounded in trust and understanding.”

Cultural Misunderstanding

We would agree that cultural differences are an integral part of intercultural communication. Based on the paradox cited above, cultural misunderstanding would be minimised if “participants […] listen a lot more [and are] more aware and open to others”. However, we gathered two types of answers on the question relating to misunderstanding caused by linguistic differences: the first culprit seems to be language and how it is spoken or written; the second is how each human ear/eye perceives “spoken” and “unspoken” messages. On the one hand, some respondents think that expressing ideas and understanding what is said varies from one individual to the other, especially when more than one language or language variety is being used. Furthermore, a cultural interpretation of what we thought we heard or thought we said is problematic, especially when interlocutors from different cultures do not have the same tools or resources for simultaneously verifying communication codes (Bickerton, 1990; Burling, 1993; Spradley and al., 1972; Von Humboldt,
This is especially true when we consider the fact that “a vast majority of intercultural interactions are largely asymmetrical” (Cooks, 2001: 341).

When some respondents say that misunderstanding “is part and parcel of international projects” or that they are a “source of conviviality”, they remind us of Spitzak’s (Spitzak, 1998) argument about the nature of asymmetric intercultural exchanges whereby those who hold real power hardly find fault with any of the exchanges, especially if their interests are not threatened; they prefer to maintain the status quo in condescending terms or worse still, with an air of indifference. We will examine the implications of this power matrix (Gudykunst, 1984; Spradley and al., 1972) later in relation to North-South relations, specifically international cooperation projects. Culture and power often go hand-in-hand during intercultural dialogue and this sometimes leads to subjective observations of misunderstanding, where there might not be any. This is a problem for some and not for others in Carenad.

Cultural Stereotyping

In the words of one respondent, “Time is a rare but essential commodity; it plays an important role in our lives … a role that we must always take into consideration, as it forces us to stop and ponder, thus serving as a filter against our emotional reactions or our individual impulses.” From outward physical appearance to judging one’s behaviour, we begin the hardy task of stereotyping others who are not like us and who do not think like we do—a process and strategy set in motion from childhood, couched in a “mom/dad-said that … syndrome”, (DeCasper and al., 1980; DeCasper and al., 1986; Feyereisen, and al., 1991) when mom or dad repeatedly used social examples to prepare us for life beyond their protective hands. As Cooks (Cooks, 2001) points out, interaction between people of different cultures is in itself “transformative” whereas stereotyping freezes the interactions of others to the extent that the meaning of their exchange remains constant while the context in which it is being produced could vary. Some of these observations enable us to understand why some respondents strongly feel that there is no stereotyping in the interactions between Carenad members, whereas others sincerely believe that openly admitting their existence, while recognising the role they usually play in intercultural communication, is the most honest way of cleaning up our perception of others (Kachru and al., 1986; Scheunpflug, 1997; Zdenek, 1998). While programme and project managers need to be politically correct in their public discourses, those who must get the day-to-day job done must be frank, open and sincere in expressing their perceptions either of the work they are doing or of the partners with whom they are doing it.

We should point out here that only the orally administered part of the questionnaire enabled us to get to the bottom of the “taboo” discussion on stereotyping, which was presented as an obstacle or a key to learning in intercultural communication. Those respondents, who first denied using stereotypes in their discourse, were ironically able to give examples relating to race, sex, age and
hierarchy; they made it clear that these examples were never an issue in their personal interactions with other partners. Those who had the courage to cite and use some of these stereotypes, claim that using them helped them “find the truth” as well as “to understand the origin of these set descriptions”. After two years of working together, participants from at least the three countries used in this study point to the fact that cultural interaction has actually been an unexpected “tutor” that has enabled them learn to work together and especially to avoid stereotyping or at least to take great strides towards knowing others better and consequently eliminating ignorance-generated stereotypes.

Prejudging Others

“It is almost impossible for anyone not to prejudge others, […] especially during the setting up of a fair and democratic structure like Cærenad,” observes one respondent. Another one points out that “[…] in a situation where resource allocation and decentralisation of power are brokered between unequal forces, one should expect some slips and justification based on prejudgements which unfortunately have nothing to do with the set objectives of the collaborative project.” This is the case where “difference” which ought to help “enrich Cærenad” may in fact serve less laudable ends, as distance, language and economic means become excuses for stalling the partnership (Appiah, 1994). It is important here again to point out that globalisation efforts that ignore the potentially disruptive power of these socio-cultural variables are doomed to encounter serious difficulties, and the Cærenad project has not been an exception.

Enhancing Instruction in the Global Context: Some Tangible Results

The thread that holds the Cærenad centre and its ambitious project is Distance Education, an educational option that seems to have come of age as a result of two new trends: globalisation and the blessings of new information and communications technologies. The birth of Cærenad at the end of the twentieth century and its set up at the beginning of the twenty-first century are both timely and pleasant coincidences of events that were long overdue. The imbalances in the world order, in the global economy, as well as in the balance of financial and intellectual power (Ikome, 2000; Dodd, 1998; Spradley and al., 1972), needed a tactical reversal through the democratisation of education and a total review of instructional strategies designed to increase access to knowledge and economic power. A small but efficient distance learning university, Téluq, has managed over a period of thirty years to develop a variety of well-adapted pedagogical models, largely implemented at a distance, to respond to the ever-pressing need to reach out to a larger portion of the population which traditionally does not have easy access to higher education and is therefore deprived of the knowledge base with which it can prosper or fully participate in national development. Its pedagogical models have far-reaching implications for accessibility to postsecondary education and knowledge in general,
thanks to computer-chip-based technologies and networking advantages of the Internet.

**Early International Cooperation Projects**

In the early years of Téluq’s international projects, distance education and its related pedagogical models were exported to Africa, Latin America and the Indian Ocean region through the touted innovative training programme *FADIM* (Distance Education Now). Envisaged as a means by which distance education trainers could be trained on the ground in different localities, the *FADIM* training programme sowed the seeds of distance learning in countries where larger portions of the population did not and could not have access to postsecondary education. Course materials from the northern richer countries like Canada could then be easily adapted and offered at a distance to people in remote areas. Today, the outskirts of Dakar in Senegal, Cuiaba in Brazil, Réduit in Mauritius, to name just a few, have access to the centres of knowledge such as the universities of Sheik Anta Diop (ENS), Mato Grosso (UFMT) and Mauritius (UoM). These earlier initiatives are the backbone to the successful realisation of several current Cærenad projects. One can presume that the difficulties engendered by cultural and institutional differences were greatly minimised by the fact that Téluq has had some working experience with each of the Southern partners before the virtual Centre was set up.

**Consolidation of Earlier Initiatives**

The creation of Cærenad has inevitably consolidated these earlier initiatives and has set the tone for better use of distance learning materials, expertise and models both at the local and international levels. A few success stories relating to the enhancement of instruction can be reported here to capture the potential of this kind of international initiative. In Mauritius, the J. Baguant Centre for Distance Learning5 (Honoré-Hortalle, 1999) is part of the extension programme at the University of Mauritius, which has created more admission and learning opportunities for citizens of the tiny island country that was unable to meet the postsecondary demands of an increasingly literate society. Beyond the bi-modal extension programme, further international cooperation has resulted in the creation of a technology-based Virtual Centre for Innovative Learning Technologies, which, it is hoped, will help bring new Mauritian pedagogical models into the 21st century.

Many extended Cærenad projects will emanate from these established assets and their future success heavily depends on how well Cærenad management empowers UoM to have a leadership role in the execution of some of the projects’ future plans. At the advanced teacher-training school (ENS) of the Sheik Anta Diop university in Senegal, local distance education trainers now train future teachers whose reach

5. The DE centre, created in 1993, is an offshoot of the Centre for Extra Mural Studies—a CIDA-sponsored link programme successfully developed and set up by The Laurentian University (Canada) and the University of Mauritius.
goes beyond traditional city colleges and high-schools; its lecturers and professors
and now boast of successes in offering literacy and secondary education to young
girls as well as to a largely illiterate adult population. At the school itself, based on
the promise of national and regional expansion of distance learning, a Cærenad
centre has been built and is currently being expanded to accommodate more distance
learning activities supported by a modern infrastructure of teleconferencing,
videoconferencing, a wider access to the Internet and eventually a state-of-the-art
production and editing service. This technologization of ENS is sponsored by other
development agencies including the World Bank and AUF (an association of French
universities). In this case as well, earlier initiatives helped define the strengths of the
local experts, as well as the needs of the local population, and Cærenad projects
were tailored to fit this reality. In Costa Rica, the UNED virtual laboratories model
has been used to illustrate how lab work can be conveniently carried out in the study
of wildlife without tampering with real species. Cærenad members have had the
privilege of working with the Costa Rican research team or of being presented pilots
as the work progress. The staff collaborations and experience in doing research
together has made this onerous scientific endeavour feasible, and the Centre has
maximized and encouraged these enduring relationships through its projects on the
environment. At Télúq, in Canada, a virtual campus model is currently being tested
and showcased to highlight the choices of the future in university training. A
student⁶, completing an M.A. in distance learning at Télúq reports enthusiastically,
from the city of Cuiaba in Brazil, on the effectiveness of distance learning models,
as she tests her skills in the vast region of Mato Grosso during her in-service training
requirements. Graduate academic and research programmes constitute an important
test for the success of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the enhancement of
instruction at the global level. It is still too early to evaluate the merits of this new
trend in the global democratisation of education using feasible instructional models
based on distance learning.

The Instruction-enhancement Connection

Globalisation, education and access all go hand-in-hand for those who consider
the democratisation of education a priority for the 21st century. The resource centre
for applied studies in distance education is a democratic example of how knowledge
can truly be shared intra-nationally as well as internationally. It is also a testable
example of a North-South consortium in which knowledge can be put in from
different continents and taken out to different countries, as a result of well-thought
out tools for adapting education, knowledge and technology⁷. The challenges for
going this Centre up and running are a testament to what change comes with and

⁶ Andrée Deschênes, 2003, « La construction de sens par l’expérimentation ». Le Sans Papier
(Nouvelles du Cærenad. 6 janvier 2003,
⁷ See Télúq’s ADAPWEB, SAVIE, EXPLOR@, DIVER-CITÉ LANGUES, DÉCIA ;
UoM’s VCILT
how determination of single individuals, governments, work groups and a good dose of luck can lead to progress and the betterment of larger portions of the populace.

From the lessons of the Cærenad venture, one can venture a series of guidelines for sustained success which would otherwise continue to be menaced by the traditional imbalances we alluded to earlier (Ascuncion-Landé and al., 1981): “North/South”, “Developed/Underdeveloped”, “Rich/Poor”, Haves/Have-nots”, “Literate/Illiterate”, “Civilised-Uncivilised”.

The Challenges of Bridging the Gap

The working documents of Cærenad, including signed agreements show that the sole Northern country—Canada—that is involved in this partnership had no intention of spoon-feeding its partners, of dumping pre-fabricated knowledge, or as the host of the start-up project, of playing “Godfather” to the other five member countries. Of course, these practices seemed to always crop up as projects were being put together but, they actually helped as test cases and reminders of the challenges of the mammoth project, and kept leaders, project managers and participants on their toes all the time. Giving that difficulties and setbacks are more often reported than progress itself, some might argue that the project pays lip-service to democracy and that it actually perpetrates the exploitation of the ‘haves’ by the ‘have-nots’. The facts of the matter, in this case, point to the contrary (Ascuncion-Landé and al., 1981). Beyond the posturing and the obvious shortcomings of individuals, the emerging benefits are encouraging enough to warrant the belief that this venture does not maintain the status quo but rather challenges it. It’s up to those who must carry on and implement the positive outcomes of the initiative, to steer the expanding consortium in a direction that will truly correct some of the inequalities that traditional western-style educational systems have cultivated and maintained as a global standard.

Many developing countries have wholly adopted Western institutional models but do not necessarily benefit from the purported benefits of global standardization (Ascuncion-Landé and al., 1981; Calvet, 1974). One can safely venture the observation that unless an academic institution in the developing world is directly or indirectly run or supported by a Western country or agency, the training, certification and standards of such an institution will constantly be questioned,

8. See section discussing the administration of a questionnaire to Cærenad participants.
9. One of the emerging benefits of this project is the creation of a new collaborative forum where ‘North’ and ‘South’ can use academic freedom to openly and responsibly criticise one another in an effort to democratise collaboration. Unlike traditional political institutions, the Cærenad consortium uses its member university institutions to design and implement both policy and projects with foresight and thought out ideas; this reduces the need for spur of the moment “politically correct” tokenism that usually leads to the expression of intent without actual implementation in the long-run.
marginalised or simply ignored\textsuperscript{10}. It is within the limits of this established order (Good, 1996; Soysal, 2000) that a North-South international project like Cærenad must constantly revise its proclaimed democratic intentions\textsuperscript{11}. This is to ensure that the intended levelling of the playing field, as well as the honest recognition that the South is maturing and actually has something to contribute to collective human progress, will at last lead to a new World Order in which the Third World can truly be brought onto the World Stage (Appiah, 1994, Huntington, 1997). The Télùq initiative and its tested international renown, is one such effort that specifically uses distance learning as an ‘open’, democratic method for tearing down the walls of academia, literacy and knowledge to ensure greater access to education to larger numbers of the world’s population.

\textbf{Bringing The Third World Onto the World-stage Through Distance Learning}

The bridging setup of Cærenad is based on a web-weaving strategy in which regional virtual centres with similar educational objectives can be woven from the ‘mother-centre’ which initially covered only three continents and six countries. The ‘reach’ possibilities of distance learning can theoretically enable participants to share a common stage where knowledge can presumably be shared equitably. We cannot escape the view that the politics and economics of today’s globalisation efforts make this trendy venture look like another strategy for multinational corporations to use government, the media and educational institutions to further consolidate their stranglehold on economic power. Well-meaning agencies, NGOs and individuals sometimes cannot match the established and well-oiled strategies used by big corporations to lobby for public opinion. I believe, though, that patience, persistence and a good dose of luck sometimes result in unexpected outcomes like the Internet, a medium that is unexpectedly empowering a larger portion of the world’s population through greater access to knowledge.

The goal of the virtual center, Cærenad, is to create a new Web of access to specialised knowledge, resources and expertise in distance learning that can eventually be used independently by those who sign on, without the traditional catch that someone or some institution will dictate how such knowledge is created, used or


\textsuperscript{11} One of the lessons learned by the ‘North’ in this joint venture is that the ‘South’ is saturated with ‘imported’ instructional models and over time, it has systematically adapted these outside models to their local realities; many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, for example, have successfully ‘formalised’ their own indigenous models to complement or sometimes replace Western ones (Ikome, 1998, 2003). Mauritius and Senegal, for instance, have consciously and deliberately adapted Télùq’s Distance Education model to suit their specific institutional priorities by designing courses and programmes that effectively meet the instructional needs of their populations.
circulated (Calvet, 1974; Chomsky, 1988). During the five-year long setup phase of the Centre, the greatest challenge and the source of serious conflict between partner institutions was the lack of acknowledgement that the international cooperation status quo still loomed at every turn, and that individual project managers needed constant reminders that ‘business as usual’ could not be tolerated. The stalemate was created by the courage of some countries in the South to stand their ground on many potentially questionable issues and to refuse token promises and veiled threats\textsuperscript{12}. This stance is a first step by these countries to fuel their own trip onto the World stage without the usually costly token help of the so-called Northern partners.

The Northern partner in Cærenad, Canada, is slow in recognising the expertise and determination of countries like Mauritius with a larger, nation-wide project to embrace technology which will certainly put this Island on the global-tech map; Costa Rica continues to expand reputation as a natural ecological laboratory, as it now turns with a vengeance to IT to develop virtual science laboratories for studying and protecting biodiversity in this tropical paradise; Brazil is succeeding in managing mass access to post-secondary education in the huge Mato Grosso central region, by effectively coordinating distance learning programmes from its Cuiabá UMFT campus to virtually every corner of the state. Senegal continues to manage all its international cooperation projects with tact and foresight, as it gradually makes limited financial and educational resources available to its populations of children, women and adults, who would otherwise be condemned to a life of poverty, illiteracy and poor health. Teacher-training is a major priority, as it eliminates the country’s dependence on expatriate teachers and continued neo-colonialism (Calvet, 1974; Soysal, 2000). These indigenous solutions and proposals for change are the key to recognising that the South has a place at the negotiating table of globalisation issues\textsuperscript{13}. Cærenad symbolically offers the first flight of stairs to the floor on which the North is holding its meetings. The Northern participant which is already at this concerting table, must, as it has already promised its Cærenad Southern partners, extend a collegial helping hand\textsuperscript{14} to its five friends and

\textsuperscript{12} In an apparently promising joint project agreed upon by EN-Senegal, UoM-Mauritius and Téluq-Quebec to design, produce and offer a course in intercultural communication, participants in Mauritius pointed out the fact that the Northern partner did not play by the rules. They therefore held back their contribution until such time that Téluq admitted to playing ‘boss’ under the guise of assuming ‘leadership and concretely allowed the collaborating Southern partners to initiate and determine the form of key components of the course.


\textsuperscript{14} It should not come as a surprise that Southern countries would seek their autonomy and independence, and at the same time ask for help from their apparent ‘oppressors’ to attain this goal. This contradiction is understandable in the Cærenad context where five Southern countries look up to their sole Northern partner to keep its promise of democratising collaboration—a promise which, when fully implemented, will serve as a model for future
partners as they trod up the staircase to where the real action on instruction in the global context is taking place.

Third-worldliness: Some Illustrations from the African Continent and Beyond

In a special Fall issue of RÉSEAU: le Magazine de l’Université du Québec, the cover page is adorned with a full-blown photograph of an African in whose eyes one can clearly read the caption: “Does Africa have any future?” In its centre-fold, the issue’s six articles on Africa do not paint as bleak a future as one would expect. Why? Because its authors believe in the new trend, one in which international cooperation is no longer a one-way street but rather an exercise in intercultural understanding. All the authors seem to agree that Africa’s problems must primarily be managed by Africans themselves. The Director of the Càrenad virtual centre had a running motto that she never got tired repeating: “let the partners speak for themselves; let them make their own choices”. This was easy to say. Exercising this freedom was another matter altogether. The challenge was not just the Centre’s Director, but that of other managers and participants from Canada. Some historical facts and precedents help us put this paradox in perspective.

The North has a history of colonisation, of providing hand-outs and of intervening politically, economically and militarily in less developed countries. Developing countries have gotten used to getting the “best” directives from Western industrialised countries and have internalised the belief that their own initiatives must first be validated by a former colonizer or by a so-called advanced and developed country. Many of the social criteria for governance and academic recognition have been met by a significant segment of the elite in developing countries. For instance, the military, political, economic and academic think-tanks and leaders have trained in Western schools, worked in Northern societies and have returned home to train their own, sometimes alongside expatriates. So, where is the problem and why is there still an emphasis on difference? Much of it has to do with strategic stigmatisation and an ingrained preference for foreign intervention (Zdenek, 1998). Sometimes, if not too often, this interventionism comes in the guise

North-South collaborative efforts. It may be useful here to point out that ‘collegiality’ is an academic ‘universal’ adopted by all Universities, irrespective of their geographical location; in this environment, these kinds of apparent contradictions are common currency and are worked out through continuous debate and mutual understanding.

15. Réseau : le magazine de l’université du Québec/automne 2002. I reproduce, hereafter, the captions of each author, for a better understanding of the global implication of the issue:
of international cooperation. Without citing the entire relevant literature dealing with these issues (Rogers, 1999; Scheunpflug, 1997; Soysal, 2000; Spradley and al., 1972; Wardhaugh, 1987), one can understand why laudable joint ventures, such as Cärenad, run the risk of not working in the long-run or why they may simply be perceived as yet another guise for the North to play its old tricks on the South! For reasons of fairness and relative objectivity, let’s look at this issue from another angle.

Birthing an International Project

The Cärenad project was initially an academic initiative financed by a touted Canadian development agency (CIDA) after an open public competition between several Canadian universities. Political, economic and military matters played no direct role in the selection of the winning project. But the individual researchers and administrators, who put the proposal together and also identified the foreign collaborators, could be put under the microscope to ascertain their understanding of international cooperation or the implications of this specific multi-lateral venture (Cärenad). As a participant and one time manager in the project, I could not help but notice the frequency with which ingrained or, I dare say, inbred beliefs\textsuperscript{16} in the psyche of my Northern colleagues seriously threatened the on-going and long-term implementation of the Centre’s goals, especially those related to mutual respect, gender and the environment. I do not base the ensuing report and relevant commentary solely on personal experience or opinions, but largely on findings from the administration of the questionnaire presented earlier on, in this paper. To make this point as clearly and as objectively as I can, I will present each case using a hierarchical and diachronic category.

Grants Application

The Canadian grants application process can help us understand how some of the bad seeds of failure can get sown with the good from the outset and subsequently result in the potential demise of the long-term success of the project itself. The current Cärenad project benefited from the lessons learned from a previous grants refusal. The applicants at Têluq and the partners, who were consulted during the write-up phase, were screened for motivation, long-term commitment, academic relevance, administrative skill, international experience and openness to innovation.

\textsuperscript{16} As impressionistic as this claim may appear, I must admit that I cannot skirt around the possibilities it offers in our understanding of collective belief and the establishment of ideological culture. As looks (on the surface) can be deceiving, I got close enough to many of my Northern colleagues to understand the depth of their biases and beliefs. Unable to quickly get passed what they have grown to believe as the “truth” about the ‘South’, some of them helped slow down the intercultural strategies that the project was poised to implement, to ensure a truly democratic collaboration between a culturally diverse set of partners. I allude to these tendencies and the difficulties they generated in the discussion on a set of hierarchical and diachronic categories.
This subtle screening process resulted in the withdrawal of hesitant and ideologically uncompromising participants. The end-result, after almost two years of work on the grants application, submission, review and acceptance, was that the six-member consortium received five million dollars to set up a virtual international centre within five years.

The point to be made from these observations is that, the initial strategies for successfully obtaining the grant were too quickly set aside when the time came to lay down the foundations of the virtual centre. Very quickly, during the first year, the cementing trust between the members of a very collegial team evaporated in favour of an unwarranted manoeuvre, led by the Northern partner, to tinker with the hitherto fully evaluated, approved and mandated management and implementation structure. Without getting into the unsavoury details, one can speculate that the commitments to the objectives of the project, the promises of transparency and collegiality made to Southern partners, and the long-term success of the project were regretfully put in significant jeopardy. We have suggested the underlying causes of these avoidable errors. From an intercultural perspective, we must remember that individuals, with their personalities, beliefs and prejudices, would easily slip if the mechanism for monitoring and criticism fails. It was in fact this mechanism—the Management Committee of Cærenad—that was quickly eliminated by the Directorate of the emerging Centre, as power was being consolidated in favour of a bureaucratic, functionary structure that relegated ideas and ideology to a marginal and scorned status. In the long-run, the debates and critiques that were supposed to be generated by intercultural exchange became a source of constant irritation and threat for the Centre’s upper management. We note here again that it is one thing to publicly embrace democracy and globalisation; it is a totally different thing to put it into practice, especially when the initial declaration was not done honestly or with a deep understanding of its implications.

This seems to be the a fundamental problem in North-South collaborative endeavours, whereby the North seems to always know what is right and the South helplessly lets them sabotage often perfectly good initiatives (Aitchison, 1997; Darwin, 1871; Spradley and al., 1972). In hindsight, some Northern participants would want to do things differently but there might be others, who, for reasons of personal ego and face-saving will stick to their mistaken decisions. These are the individuals whose continued involvement in the project will certainly drive the remaining structure of the Centre to the ground. Honest recognition of major errors made during the launching phase of the Centre, could have easily reassured participants and ensured that a steady momentum is maintained throughout the implementation phase of the project. This, of course did not happen, as the “ongoing learning” excuse led to a pyramidal piling of errors17—one over the other, well into the fourth and final years of the project time-line.

17. Reports following the first and second Cærenad meetings in Santiago de Chile and Dakar-Senegal, point to telling disagreements between partners that were unfortunately swept under
Protocol Agreements

All participating institutions signed a protocol stipulating the commitments of each partner with regard to human, financial and infrastructure allocation. Somehow, the Southern partners accepted to participate in the project with the unequal sharing of budget allocations from the grant money itself. The Northern partner, somehow, could pay itself (and especially its human resources) out of the grant, but the Southern partners, on the other hand, had to offer the same services, using similar resources, without financial support directly from the grant. Of course there is a CIDA policy explanation for this; but it certainly could not help in meeting the objectives of the elaborate project which were laid out collegially by the six-member consortium! One could suggest that fairness, democracy and international cooperation aimed at global development can only be promoted when the traditional practices of international aid and international development grants allocation, rid themselves of tokenism and greed.

Many Northern participants, in private, like spoiled and greedy children, insisted on having every “penny” of the grant spent on them only or entirely in Canada. Complaints by Southern participants were met with arrogant comments like “the hell with these eternal beggars; let them get their own money; this is Canadian money for Canadians only.” It is clear, from these informal comments, that some of the Northern participants who worked with partners from the South during the grants application phase, as well as during the agreement signing phase, acted in bad faith, as their actions and words later betrayed their true convictions after the grants application was approved. This underlying historically and culturally-bound perception, must be exposed and rooted out through pre-implementation intercultural education, partly paid for and promoted by the granting agency to ensure long-term success. The CIDA results-based management training programme did not specifically address these issues and the uncontrolled changing of participants rendered the single initial training almost impossible to implement.

Management Structure

The initial management structure favoured a balance between bureaucracy, academics and pedagogy. The structural hierarchy ranged from a consultation-oriented policy and decision making process, through a hands-on management strategy, to a pilot-based implementation phase. A top-down, bottom-up and lateral control system was used to encourage communication in all directions, considering the rug. At this point, the crux of the conflict should have been revealed to CIDA—the financing agency—and this could have provoked a mid-term review of the project. But given the Northern institution culture matrix of trust and autonomy, the Southern partners were kept well outside the Canadian system of managing public finances and agencies, so that their concerns were heard and systematically downplayed by the very management that was the main problem. The Northern management often got its way (as is traditionally expected) the project’s success was put in jeopardy.
the complexity of the project and the number of participants involved. It would appear that this management structure was changed on the whim and, as a result, the leadership of various teams was never allowed to settle down into any reliable routine. This panic-based approach\(^\text{18}\) resulted in a lot of energy and resources being spent on bureaucratic tinkering instead of on project development and implementation. Results from the questionnaire administered to Cærenad participants showed that the unreliable leadership of the Northern partner led Southern partners to act with a lot more reservation and mistrust than was actually necessary.

**Time-line Management**

The projected time-line for creating the Cærenad centre was five years. Different aspects of the project were assigned priority-based development and implementation plans. As mentioned earlier, participants who took the CIDA-sponsored result-based management course were, unfortunately, never allowed to stay on long enough to apply the knowledge they acquired during that training; consecutive replacements never got the training either from the sponsor’s trainer or from pushed out trainees. Why, because bureaucratic tinkering, as we pointed out earlier, took precedence over patience and common-sense. The outcome was obvious: hardly any project was completed within the projected time-line, although annual reports may point to the contrary.

**Project Selection and Implementation**

Many of the pilot projects planned for and proposed by the initial project designers, were just that: “pilot projects”. Once the management structure was seriously compromised, the interpretation and execution of the project plan became quite a challenge, as “pilots” became “full-fledged” projects and their numbers and implementation began drawing criticism both from within and from the outside\(^\text{19}\). With this turn in the selection and scheduling of projects, the idea of first setting up

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18. This panic could be traced to a historical power struggle between faculty and administration in the Northern institution. The Cærenad out-reach project could have helped reverse the ill-effects of this historical quagmire but unfortunately things tilted in favour of those who would instead use their power to settle old scores, while the unknowing and helpless Southern partners could only sit back and watch. The implications of this kind of dynamic in intercultural relations, is far-reaching.

19. My understanding of the initial project and a review of the original grants proposal show that a virtual multinational, multi-institutional center was to be set up to provide access to distance education applications, studies and resources. Its feasibility was to be tested using pilot projects after putting in place an Intranet and communications infrastructure, as well as an information strategy for educating the public on the merits and advantages of the CIDA-financed, Télug-led initiative. We later saw that there was an expensive deviation from these clearly identified objectives, partly due to institutional and individual cultural interpretations that could not or were simply not challenged.
a virtual centre based on tested training tools, experiments and courseware, became sidetracked by the desire to produce new, innovative and full-blown “products” that would inevitably take longer and cost a lot more. The temptation to cut corners by constantly introducing new projects that may have had a life in other contexts became so strong that the move towards reducing the number of projects actually resulted in the addition of new ones that could not realistically be completed within the projected time-line.

Participant Competence and Expertise

Initially, when the team of experts, researchers, professors, pedagogues and administrators, was put together to write up the grants application, emphasis was based on finding a balance in the competencies that will result in a well-thought out and feasible project. This expertise and competence came to bear with the submission of a solid project which was generously rewarded with a huge financial grant. During the setup and implementation phase, participant expertise and competence became a point of contention and was greatly diluted by preferential treatment and, very late in the programme, recourse to Southern potential proved to be untimely and insincere. When Southern expertise was sought, it was often with some amount of reservation and, worse still, these experts were not given the necessary resources to get their jobs done. When some token resources were grudgingly provided, they were often given with strings attached. These situations point to the undesirable dependence of the South on the North, even in a project that was intended to eliminate these kinds of imbalances, at least on paper.

Budget Administration and Cost-Management

Constant adjustments were made in the management of the budget. Given that expenditure was restricted and tied to what I characterised earlier as jeopardising CIDA rules, the project management had to scrabble several times to appease disgruntled Southern partners who felt like they were working for free, for the Red Cross. As these accommodations were not sincerely steeped in an honest desire to share equally or fairly with the South, they ended up being perceived as token and placating gestures. This perception could not possibly help with the advancement of the international project. Hardly any of these practices is surprising when one recalls the traditional ground rules used to run development programs headed by Northern donor countries.

20. I must point out here that intercultural competence among willing and compromising partners from different backgrounds was positively exploited to obtain this laudable result. The same can be said of subsequent teams which had the mandate to execute the researched and well thought out project proposal. In intercultural communications terms, ‘difference’, ‘complexity’, ‘ambiguity’ and sometimes ‘conflict’ are the challenges faced by artisans and mediators of international consortia. Surmounting them requires skill that has been groomed through intercultural training and experience.
Project Follow-up and Expansion

The greatest challenge yet for the Cærenad venture is the follow-up and expansion of the virtual centre model beyond three continents and including several regional centres. As we indicated earlier, some Southern partners have already begun to explore the possibility of expanding the model using the experience already gleaned from participating in the current project. Course design models, use of new technologies and virtual experimentation systems are all attractive avenues that some members are now pursuing to enhance their educational systems in the current global context. Hopefully, regional collaboration among Southern countries will eventually eliminate the historical tendency to call upon and continue relying on the North. It would be naïve to believe that Northern governments, institutions and individuals will willingly and completely let go of their stranglehold on intellectual, economic, political and military advantages (Appiah, 1994; Calvet, 1974; Darwin, 1871; Dodd, 1998; Ikome, 2000).

Globalisation efforts steered or monitored by countries of the South, will ensure that the direction of change and the outcome of such change results in significant improvement in the lives of people in developing countries. We reiterate the fact that genuine access to knowledge and independent management of that knowledge is a sure way of beginning the process of levelling the global playing field. Like the advent of the Internet and cellular telephony, Distance Education, backed by border-breaking technology, will become an eye-opening medium for enhancing instruction in the global context. The Cærenad experiment, albeit its unforgiving challenges, is proof that the world’s knowledge-hungry masses can come onto the same stage and partake of existing instructional strategies, contribute towards the creation of new knowledge, and benefit from the empowering advantages of sharing new discoveries with people across the globe.

Conclusions and Recommendations

We began this paper by suggesting that global access to meaningful and recognised knowledge must be made possible by academic institutions that seem, up till now, to be the acceptable social agency for accrediting knowledge acquired for purposes of getting a job or obtaining social recognition. In today’s global economy, these academic institutions are bound to work with industry and cultural institutions to provide access to this knowledge and especially to collectively guarantee the recognition due to the individuals who have acquired it. This “broadening” exercise is increasingly levelling the access-to-knowledge playing field, and has resulted in what some now characterise as the democratisation of education.

21 The underlying limitation for such initiatives is that Southern countries do not have access to investment and R&D capital. The Western capitalist system does not allow such capital to be globally available, even after democratic systems have been put in place. So, some kind of compromise must be sought until such time that the current dynamic changes.
The growth of distance education, and especially its potential for building new bridges with which to access postsecondary and university education, has led to increased interest in examining how this medium can enhance instruction in the global context, following tested and successful illustrations in certain countries and regions around the world. The Cærenad project is clearly an interesting test case of how the distance education success story in Quebec, Canada, can be used to weave a Web of experience and resources, and make it available through a chain-reaction process to parts of the world that need alternative modes of delivering acceptable forms of knowledge. By looking at the difficulties encountered in the setting up of such a Web of access, the new Centre provides answers to those who would be scared by a treacherous venture that is both ironically necessary and long overdue. In spite of the apparently limitless potential a distance education “cooperative” like Cærenad can offer, this paper has raised questions on how international development projects and multilateral consortia may look good on paper but completely fail to meet the targets of improvement and development claimed in its agenda and goals. In this regard, we suggest a few recommendations that serve not as thoughtless criticism but as conditions for success and a basis for changing the status quo of the grants approval process for North-led international projects (Toussaint and al. 2002).

Sponsors like CIDA need to tighten their control of programmes they sponsor by requiring significant project phase reviews by experienced neutral parties, whenever there are: 1) Major changes in the initial objectives of the project. Project managers should not be allowed to drastically change the objectives of a project soon after its approval for funding, as these changes may lead to the development and implementation of a totally new project which may not have deserved the financing. 2) Major changes in the management and power-sharing structure. The management and power-sharing structure usually guarantees the long-term implication of partners, teams and individuals. Once this structure is modified, the implications will be far-reaching, and unless they are carefully thought out, the success of the project may be put in great jeopardy. 3) Major changes in budget allocations and cost overruns. The terms of agreement for the use of a given grant must be honoured almost to the letter, with planned and pre-approved adjustments being made only after careful evaluation and justification. If for some bureaucratic or political reasons changes regarding how a grant is spent are allowed without a formal review of the project by unbiased experts or mandated representatives of the granting agency, the

22 A certain level of intercultural competence needs to be developed among participants and partners to ensure that what may appear as obstacles in the implementation of culturally conflicting or divergent interests, could in fact be the object of compromise and the ultimate test of intercultural mediation through understanding. Tables 8 & 9 of Toussaint and Fortier (2002: 25-26) suggest some of the components and mastery levels needed in the intercultural education of managers and educators in multicultural contexts. North-South cooperation, exchange and educational projects need to revisit their traditional strategies for ensuring long-term and sustainable development; intercultural competence training may have to be put at the forefront, ahead of other projected winning conditions.
project will run into difficulties relating to its structure, time-lines and implementation.

These general recommendations apply to the current Cærenad project which has been used as an illustration in this paper. If one were to agree that “culturally conditioned behaviour affects relations between groups and individuals” (Winters, 1996), then one can then safely conclude that most of the difficulties created by Cærenad’s managers were avoidable but one should also point out that the challenges and unplanned obstacles encountered during its implementation are simply part of the risk management load expected in such an undertaking. Elaine Winter’s “awareness of neighbours” (Winters, 1996) was certainly an experience that members of the Cærenad project fully confronted, and the testimony of those who were interviewed in the study, confirms the fact that this “learning experience” was indeed an important part of the definition of their “humanness”. The desire to share knowledge in a global context with strangers who want the same things we want is a challenge that cannot be overemphasized using the Téluq-led Cærenad international consortium of universities—a partnership whose sole mission is to offer a better strategy for providing post-secondary education to large portions of several population groups strewn in remote corners of the globe.

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