17,000 islands, 1 GOAL

## INDONESIA TURNS TO ONLINE RESOURCES TO CREATE

By Mary Burns

Community has taken on a new meaning for several school-based coaches spread across Indonesia. For far too long in developing countries, educators have been forced to rely on one-shot centralized professional development for teachers and those who work with them. A shortage of money, locally trained staff, and access to learning materials has made any kind of ongoing, site-based professional development impossible.

To overcome such professional development constraints in Indonesia, last year Education Development Center (EDC) launched a pilot online coaching course to help Indonesian educators learn to become school-based coaches so they can then provide school-based coaching and follow-up to teachers — both firsts in Indonesia.

Twenty-five participants across six Indonesian provinces were recruited by EDC to serve as school-based coaches. To help them in this endeavor, EDC provided three weeks of face-to-face instruction over the
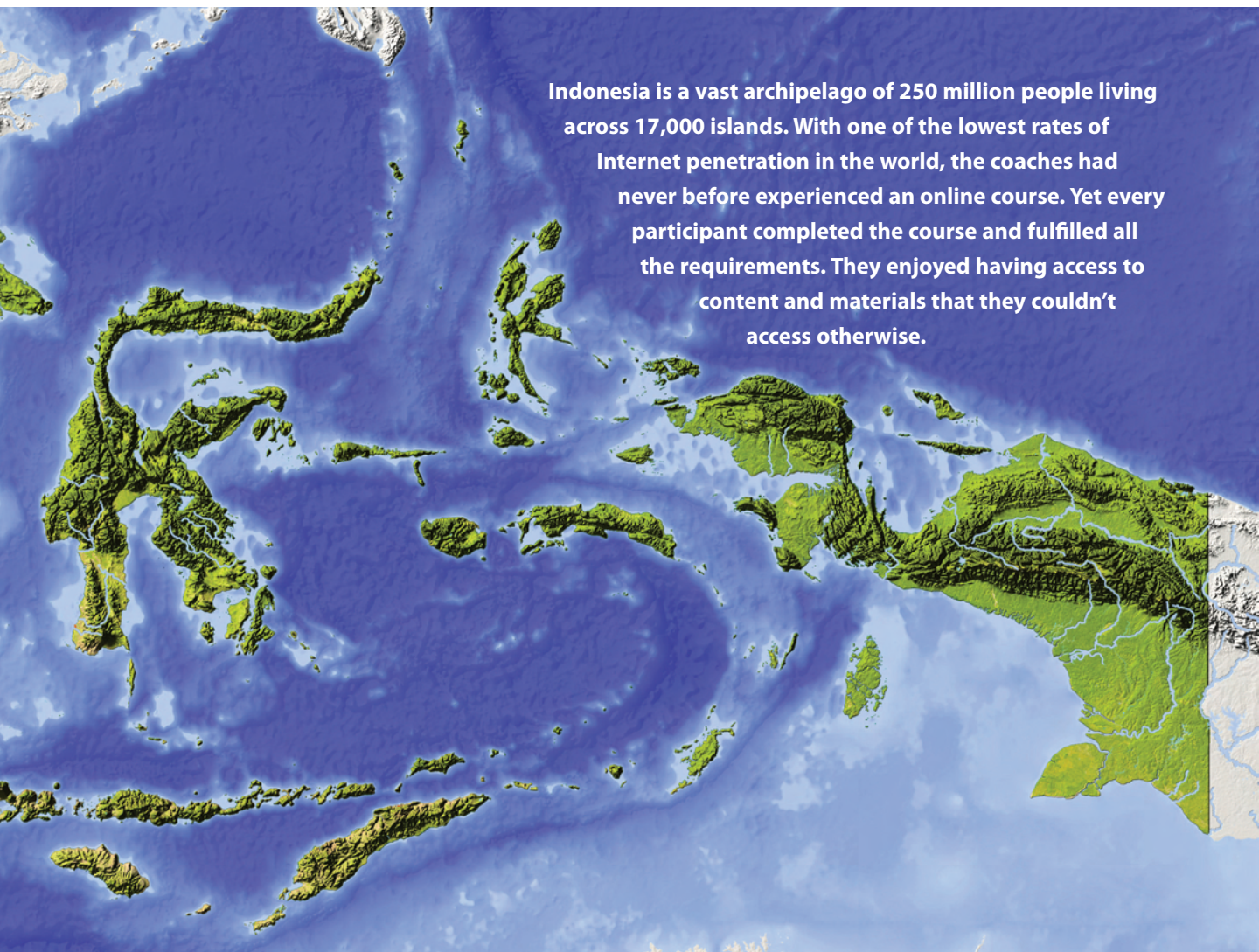
Indonesia is a vast archipelago of 250 million people living across 17,000 islands. With one of the lowest rates of Internet penetration in the world, the coaches had never before experienced an online course. Yet every participant completed the course and fulfilled all the requirements. They enjoyed having access to content and materials that they couldn't access otherwise.

A NETWORK OF SCHOOL-BASED COACHES

course of a year in such areas as using technology to promote learner-centered instruction, facilitation techniques, and school-based classroom observations and feedback. Coaching candidates then continued with their development as coaches in an online course.

The online course used a gradual release coaching approach. Online learners (the coaches) first modeled three one-computer, learner-centered activities for teachers. From there, in several two-week sessions, the course facilitators scaffolded the coaching trajectory — helping coaches work with the teacher to adapt this model lesson to the teacher's classroom, co-teach a lesson with

teachers, and observe and provide feedback to teachers in their solo teaching of this activity. As coaches learned about a particular technique, they then applied this technique with teachers. Coaches accessed all materials, including readings and video examples of coaching techniques online. They also communicated with one another — the whole group, their learning team, which was a cohort of four people, as well as their online facilitator — through the free and open-source e-learning system, Moodle. Since EDC's program developers hoped that this type of school-based professional development and coaching would continue beyond the

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life of the online course, designers focused on building an online community of practice.

Indonesia is a vast archipelago of 250 million people living across 17,000 islands. With one of the lowest rates of Internet penetration in the world, the coaches had never before experienced an online course. Yet every participant completed the course and fulfilled all the requirements. They enjoyed having access to content and materials that they couldn't access otherwise. Teachers appreciated their school-based coach, and all implemented their learner-centered, one-computer activities. Most exciting was evaluation evidence that the coaches felt they were part of an online community of practice and attributed their coaching success to their participation in this online community.

Indonesia and the U.S. are very different places, but as we evaluate the online course, we have learned that the following strategies provide a foundation for online community building no matter the country or context.

1. **Know what type of community you want and design for it.**

There are many types of communities. Many online experiences are informal communities of interest that come together around a particular topic and then

Borobudur Temple in Yogyakarta, Java.

dissipate once mastery or boredom sets in. Communities of learning focus more on teacher learning (content, for example) and less on practice, though there may be an assumption that teachers will indeed put into practice what's been learned. In contrast, we wanted a community of practice, where the focus was on shared learning and application of that learning in classrooms. (See box on p. 21 for characteristics of various communities.) Consequently, we designed the course as a four-month experience, long by online learning standards, where all coaches worked together on the same goals and activities. The course was highly structured so that each session focused on a necessary coaching skill, such as building trust with teachers, understanding the change process, or models of co-teaching, and a particular coaching activity, such as individual goal setting with teachers, planning an effective teacher meeting, or co-teaching. Coaches learned a particular technique, implemented that technique with teachers, and shared evidence of their work with their online colleagues and facilitator who in turn provided feedback and guidance. Evidence of their work might include self-assessments of their meeting facilitation skills or notes from post-classroom observation meetings with teachers.

2. **Organize learners into teams.**

Online learning can be a lonely experience. This sense of isolation often leads to high rates of attrition in online courses. To prevent such attrition, we organized coaches into provincial learning teams within which they planned and conducted activities. Such activities might include sharing professional development ideas and reviewing and providing feedback on artifacts of one another's work, such as video episodes of coaches co-teaching. In addition to online teammates, every coach had a face-to-face coaching partner with whom he or she worked on all course requirements and school-

TOOLS WE USED

Moodle http://moodle.org/ Free, open-source course management software.	**Skype** www.skype.com Make voice calls over the Internet.
Diigo www.diigo.com Annotate, store, and share web bookmarks with others.	**Dimdim** www.dimdim.com Web conferencing services.
Flickr www.flickr.com Post, organize, and share photos.	**Ning** www.ning.com Do-it-yourself, interest-based social networks.
Teacher Tube www.teachertube.com Videos of teachers and clips to be used in teaching as well as shared documents, photos, and community forums.	**VoiceThread** www.voicethread.com Collaborative slideshows that incorporate images, video, audio, written word, and other media.

Types of communities and their characteristics (Burns & Dimock, 2007)

Community of interest	Community of learning	Community of practice
• Initial stage of community formation.	• More developed stage of community formation.	• Most developed stage of community formation.
• Learners connect with one another via a shared professional interest.	• Learners come together around a joint enterprise — to learn about a particular concept, skill, or tool.	• Learners come together to implement a particular concept, skill, or tool.
• May not be goal-oriented.	• Goal-oriented.	• Goal-oriented.
• Characterized by communication.	• Characterized by cooperation and collegiality.	• Characterized by ongoing collaboration.
• Focus is on the interest or innovation itself.	• Focus is on teachers' learning.	• Focus is on practice and application of learning.
• Loosely formed; little coherence.	• Well-formed; may meet on regular basis for purposes of mutual learning.	• Highly formed; meets regularly for purposes of collaboration.
• Investigation and exploration of skill, concept, or tool.	• Deeper investigation of skill, concept, or tool with the understood goal of application.	• May involve parallel teaching, co-teaching, or peer observation and feedback.
• May be little or no sharing of resources or experiences.	• Sharing resources, experiences, and individual practice.	• Explicit emphasis on moving learning into practice, on doing, and shared action. Sharing resources, experiences, and shared practice.
• Some degree of mutuality and reciprocity.	• Higher degree of mutuality and reciprocity.	• Highest degree of mutuality and reciprocity.

based coaching activities. Learners always had someone they could turn to.

3. Train facilitators in the medium in which they'll facilitate.

In an online learning environment, the facilitator plays a critical and varied role. He or she is the face of what can be, for novices, a disembodied and potentially disorienting experience. Facilitators must work to establish a welcoming presence, set a tone that encourages reflection and inquiry, broaden and deepen online communication, and encourage those who fall behind. Most critically, to make the online environment feel like a conversation and cultivate a sense of belonging, facilitators must provide verbal immediacy and just-in-time assistance (Rodriguez, Plax, & Kearney, 1996). Because a high-quality facilitator is so critical to success in on-

line learning, the course's online instructor prepared for her role as a facilitator by participating in EDC's EdTech Leaders Online (ETLO) program. Through ETLO, the facilitator learned how to navigate Moodle, the course management system, use techniques for online community building, and facilitate meaningful online discussions.

4. Establish frequent opportunities for interaction and collaboration.

Online discussions and shared practice bind a collection of individuals into a collaborative community. Without this interaction and collaboration, learning becomes a solo endeavor.

The course established frequent opportunities for communication and collaboration among coaches. Coaching partners worked together on their weekly

school-based assignments with the same group of teachers. We required that coaches participate in at least two discussions a week. Teams used social bookmarking sites such as Diigo to collect and annotate a common set of coaching resources and constructed an ongoing e-portfolio of their work. This e-portfolio served almost as a coaching handbook, and included, among other requirements, coaches' reflections on particular coaching strategies, video examples of a meeting with teachers

Above, nighttime in the capital city of Jakarta. At right, rice terraces in Bali.

early and later in the coaching process, annotated photos of their work with teachers, and examples of teachers' work and how coaches assisted with this work.

Every other week, the asynchronous online discussion was replaced by a live synchronous discussion via web 2.0 real-time meeting applications. For instance, coaches shared and assessed one another's co-teaching videos via VoiceThread, which facilitates real-time audio or chat discussions around an image or video. With the exception of individual reflections in Moodle's discussion forum, coaches never worked alone.

5. Where possible, build in face-to-face interactions.

Online or web-based professional development is not one model but rather a continuum of practices that vary in the amount of learning that occurs online. As much as possible, this online coaching course integrated opportunities for face-to-face interaction in order to enhance the online community aspect. Face-to-face interaction was place-based. Coaches spent a total of three weeks in face-to-face sessions where together they learned process skills — for example, questioning techniques — and where they got to know one another. Additionally, they participated in a two-day face-to-face orientation for the online course where they learned about Moodle as well as the Web 2.0 tools — Flickr, Ning, Teacher Tube — to be used as part of the online course.

Live, face-to-face interactions also had a virtual component. Coaches used a number of Internet applications — Skype, the free Internet telephony application,

and Dimdim, a free web meeting tool — for ongoing small- and large-group discussions and reflections where they could see one another and talk in real time. Both versions of face-to-face interaction further strengthened community-based aspects of the online learning experience.

6. Focus on written communication.

The real value of online learning comes from sharing ideas and experiences in rich and robust discussions. This sort of communication creates the kinds of connections and interactions that are the cornerstone of an online community. The duality of asynchronous online writing — the fact that it is both a means of introspection and of communication — deepens participants' own reflection of their existing practices while allowing for the exchange of ideas, data, resources, and strategies. But because online communication is still largely text-based, the quality of these exchanges is largely dependent upon strong writing skills.

The importance of writing is often overlooked in online courses. Novice learners may lack familiarity with conventions of online communication. They may not know how to respond to a colleague's posts, especially if they disagree with the content, or how to compose the thoughtful responses that provoke and sustain discussion. They may not have knowledge of netiquette — using appropriate subject lines, addressing the individual or group, or using techniques to extend the online discussion — seemingly minor points that cumulatively can derail online communication and learning. Even experienced online learners may lack the composition and rhetorical skills needed to condense complex thoughts or provocative ideas into coherent and nonpolemical language.

Most of the two-day orientation with coaches focused on honing their online communication skills. Coaches discussed standards for good online writing,