

# Designing and Facilitating Collaborative Learning for Communities of Practice

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# Objectives

- Communities of practice
- Tools to build and strengthen communities of practice
- Measuring collaborative learning using social network analysis (SNA)
- An example

Kapucu, Naim.(2012). Classrooms as Communities of Practice: Designing and Facilitating Learning in a Networked Environment. *Journal of Public Affairs Education*. 18(3):585-610.

# Introduction

- Learning is a social process taking place within the context of our daily actions and experiences
- Collaborative learning is active participation of students in the learning process instead of being passive absorbers
- Bringing individuals together and forming communities of practice is an important tenet of learning

# Communities of Practice

- Communities of practice are formed by people of
  - similar concerns or interests,
  - with the aim of addressing these concerns:
    - solving problems,
    - improving their performance (with regular interaction)
- Social networking and online teaching platforms can provide additional venues for teaching and learning

## Key Questions to Answer

- How does relationship-building impact student learning in communities of practice?
- How do different types of assignments and class activities impact collaborative learning?
- How can we develop more effective learning assignments?

# Learning in Communities of Practice



Components of a Social Theory Of Learning (Wenger, 2005, p. 5)

- Learning is social...
- Facilitation
- Participants learn when
  - Involve in community (belonging)
  - Do certain activities (doing)
  - Establish identity (being)
  - Interpret the world around (experience)

# Collaboration for Communities of Practice

- Collaboration is related with belongingness
- Three Pillars of belongingness
  - *Engagement*: getting together with people and share experience and knowledge
  - *Imagination*: attachment to broader images that people make up in their minds
  - *Alignment*: mutual alignment towards common goals as well as the separate processes of collaborating with partners

# Collaborative Learning

- Collaborative learning refers to an instruction method in which learners at various performance levels work together in small groups toward a common goal
  - Active class contribution
  - Work with other students on projects
  - Work with classmates outside of class
  - Participate in a community-based projects
  - Discuss ideas from readings with others
  - Ability to learn from peers
  - Involvement and experience



# Collaborative Learning

- Collaborative learning supports modern paradigms on learning:
  - Deeper level learning (Biggs 1987)
  - Shared understanding/knowledge (Mulder, Swaak, & Kessels 2002)
  - Critical thinking (Bullen 1998)
- Combined with an authentic context:
  - Social construction of knowledge (Jonassen 1992, 1994)
  - Competence-based learning (Keen 1992)

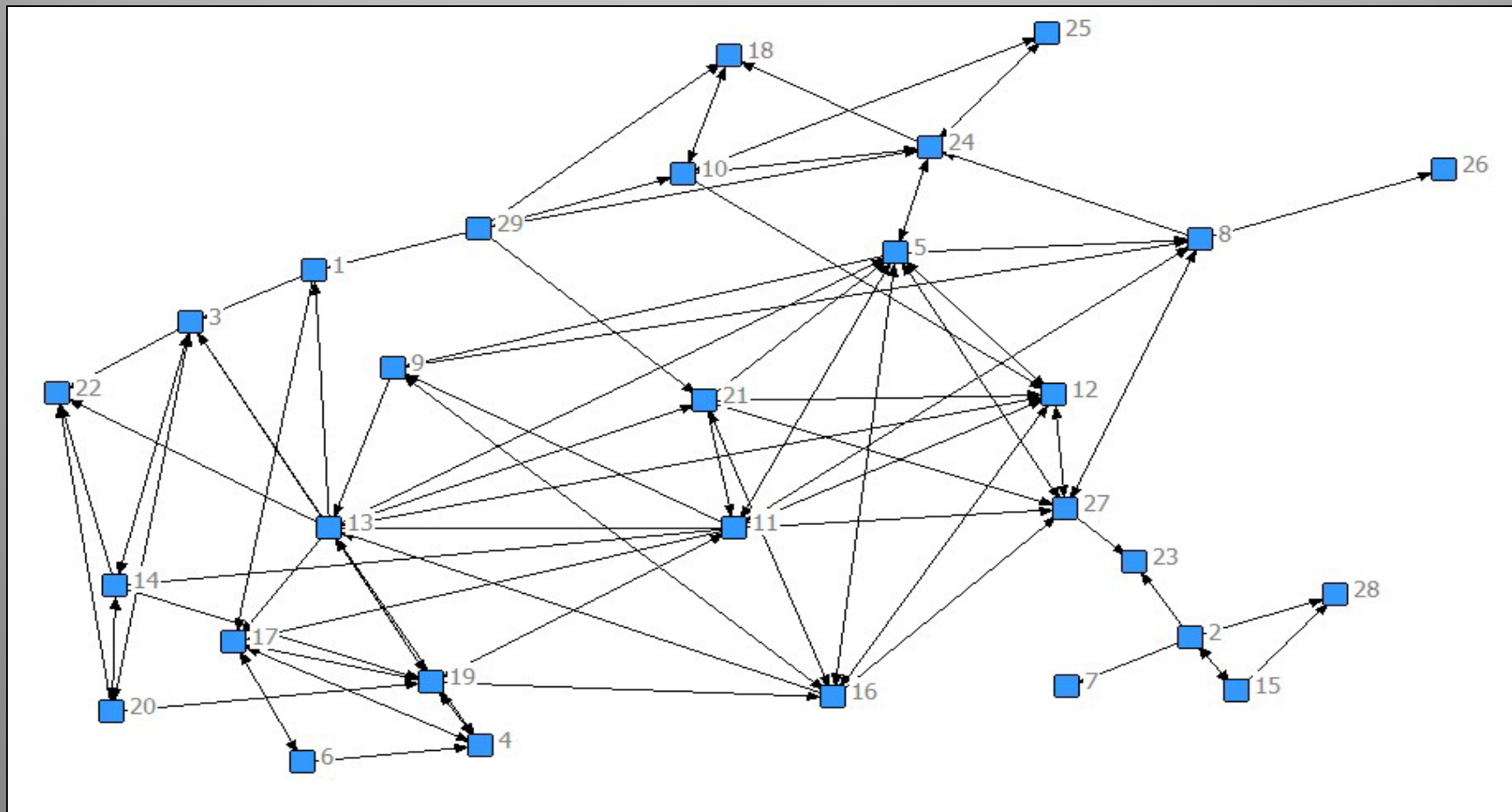
# Instructor's Goals & Teaching Philosophy

- *Three pillars: collaboration, mutual respect, and engagement*
- In order for the common goal, collaborative learning, to be reached, collaboration (trust) needs to be developed
- *Participative lectures*: most of my classes have some level of award for participation, as I believe the best way of learning

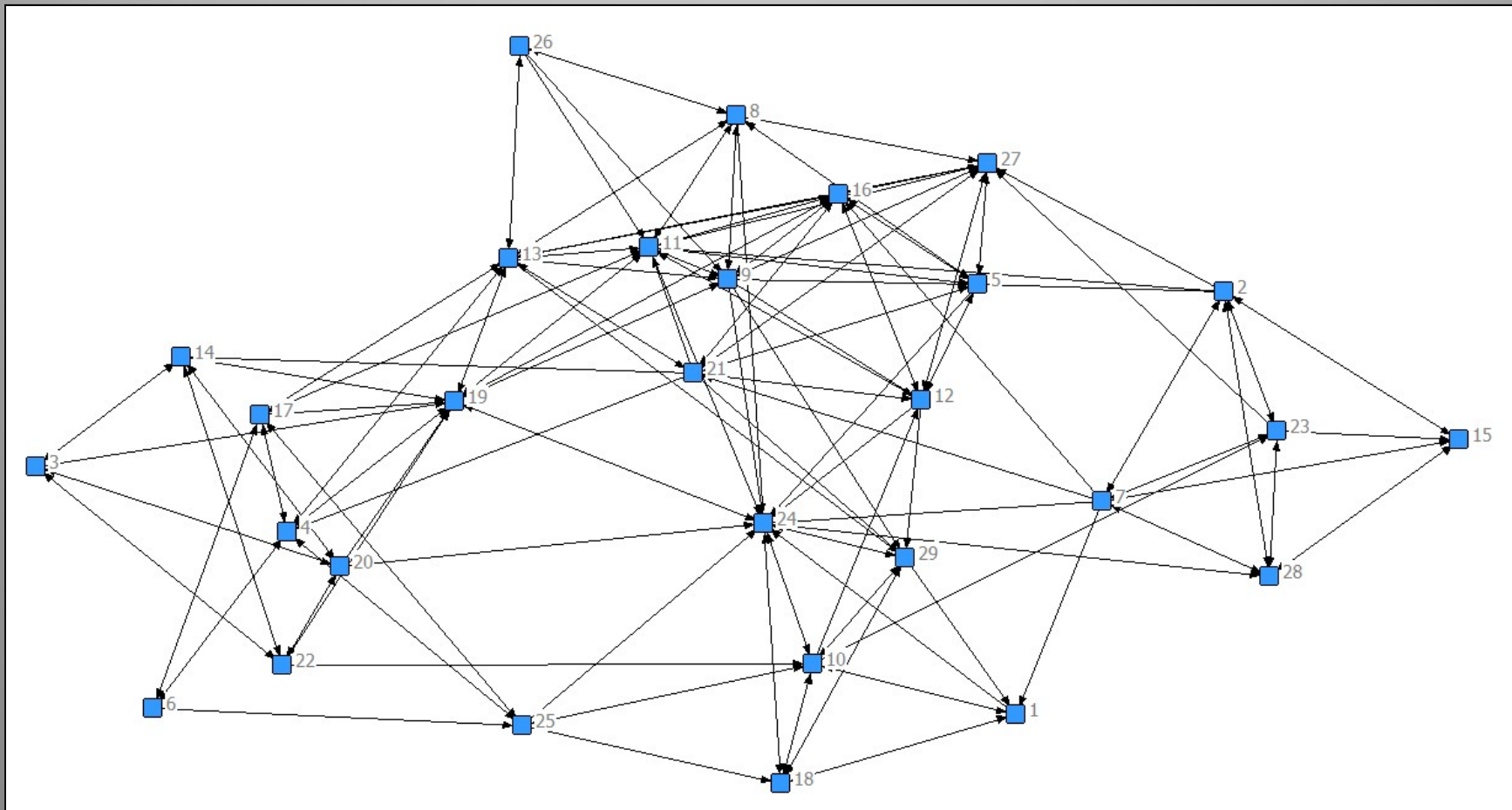
# Collaborative Learning Activities

- How to manage your network article
- Ice-breaking activities
- Guest lecturers
- Site visits
- Online activities and Webcourses
- Review questions / Group discussions
- Games & simulations
- Case studies
- Research-based service-learning projects

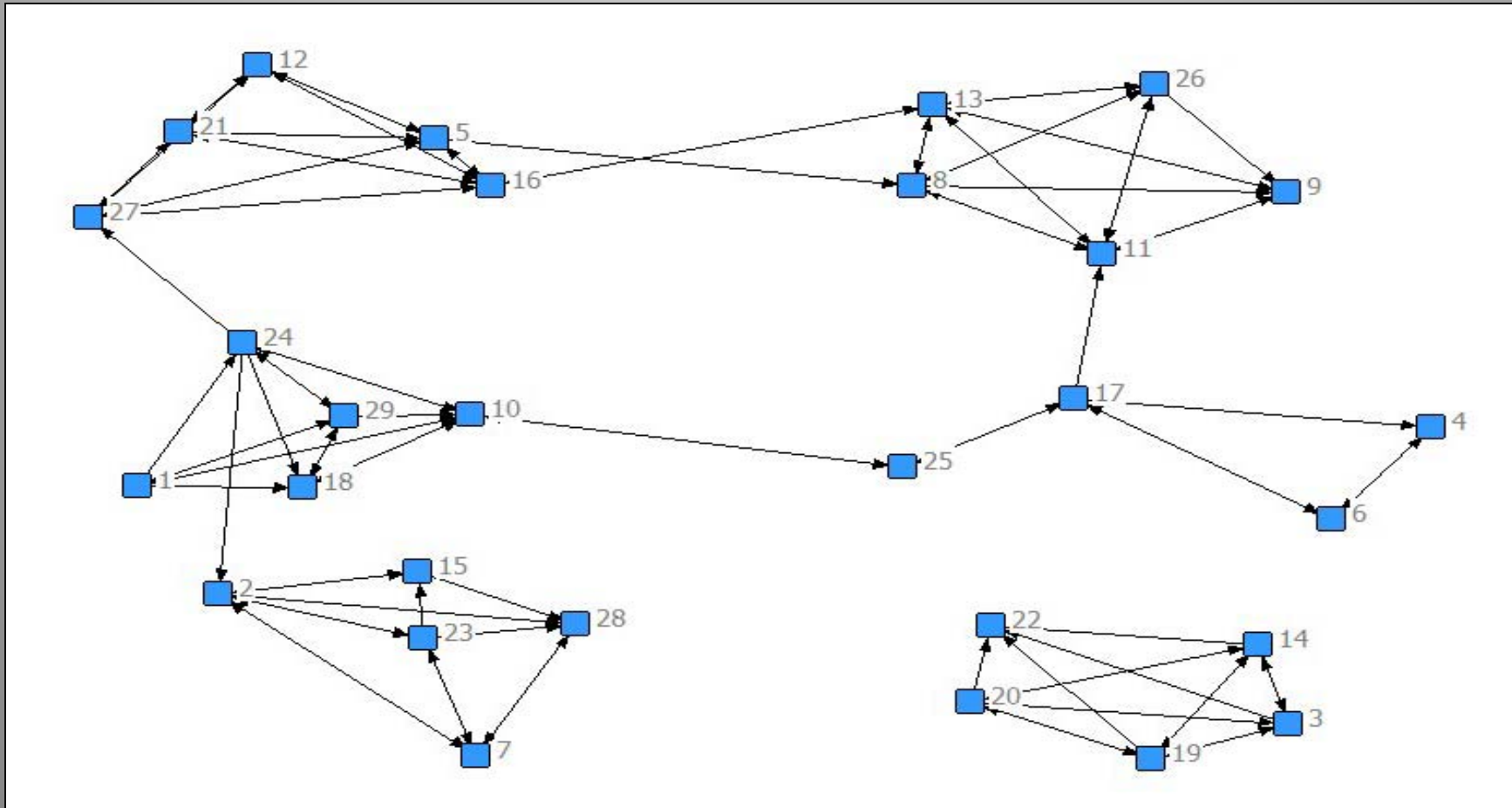
# Friendship network (before)



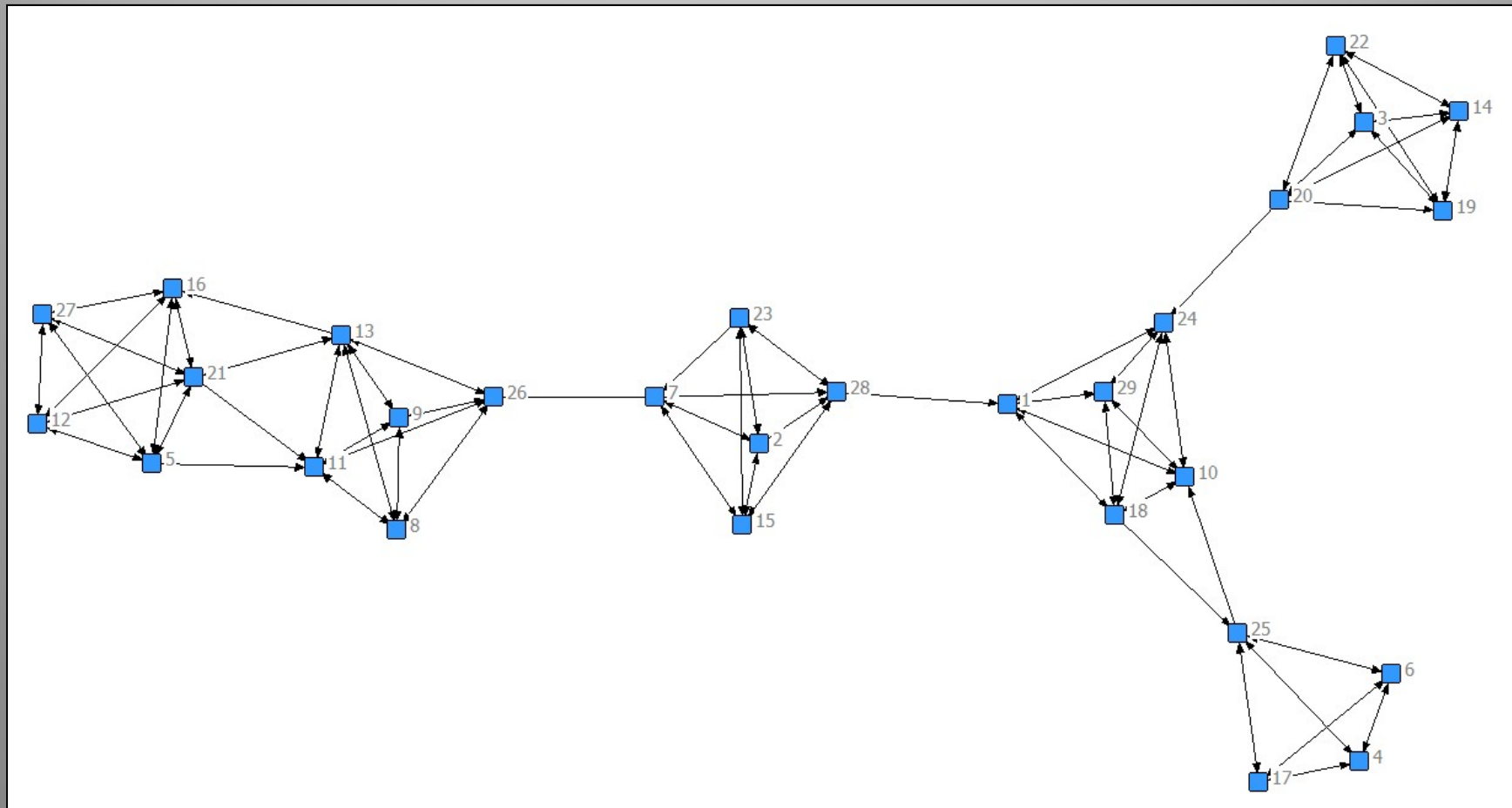
# Friendship network (after)



# Advice Network (before)



# Advice Network (after)



# Descriptive Results

- Network/relationship building emphasized in class is critical in real life
- Practitioner guest speakers were great
- Activities in the class were helpful in developing networks / relationships
- Field visits (e.g., EOC visit) were very helpful
- Team activities were helpful in to my learning in the course
- Service-learning term projects were helpful to my learning
- Diverse experiences of my classmates were helpful to my learning



# Conclusion

## Communities of Practice through CBR/SL:

- Build trust via long lasting relationship with the community: **social capital**
- Serve the community by helping to address its needs: **capacity building**
- Educate students/researchers and teach them how to become better citizens: **engagement**
- Build **communities of practices** around pressing social problems

# Conclusion

- Students learn more from interacting with other students and practitioners
- Students increase their learning and as a result of collaborative learning activities
- If we allow student led instruction, then we have to ensure that students work effectively together and do not remain in silos that are created by them or environment
- Collaborative learning activities help build competency (engagement)

# Discussions & Questions



Thank you ...