Chapter 1
Understanding the Nature of Academia and Doctoral Programs

ABSTRACT

This chapter lays the foundation for the book by describing two parts of the proposed framework for the examination of doctoral programs in education. Communities of practice is defined for the purposes of this framework and examples are given to help the reader further understand the underlying concepts. The history of graduate programs is set forth as another fundamental tool for understanding doctoral programs. This leads into Chapter 2, which focuses on that history.

Before I can address the three perspectives mentioned in the Preface, I must do justice to this academic project by giving it both a theoretical and a conceptual framework. I tell my doctoral candidates on a regular basis that these must be in place to ensure the quality of their work. In this case, I deem it important to add these frameworks for two reasons:

- To give clarity and consistency to my depiction of each perspective on the doctoral programs in education
- To keep me from deviating off into stories that may or may not aid in illuminating your path

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-2656-9.ch001

Copyright © 2020, IGI Global. Copying or distributing in print or electronic forms without written permission of IGI Global is prohibited.
As a reminder, a conceptual framework determines what you examine. A theoretical framework determines how you examine and interpret the results. Put another way, a conceptual framework gives you research-based list of the evidence to examine. The theoretical framework is a lens through which to view and interpret it.

It takes a good doctoral program (and sometimes more) to truly understand these ideas in any depth. I will attempt to use practical language and explanations throughout this book to help you understand the effect of my choice of both theoretical and conceptual frameworks. This chapter is merely a start.

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AS THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this book is called Communities of Practice (Wenger-Trayner, O’Creevy, Hutchinson, Kubiak, & Wenger-Trayner, 2014; Wenger, 1998). I could claim to have carefully chosen this framework for the book, but that would be misleading. I have understood the realms of K-12 teaching, academia, and almost every other aspect of work, religion, and life through this theoretical framework since the day I was introduced to it. It was among the hundreds of readings I was assigned as a doctoral student at Missouri. It nearly instantaneously changed how I think and operate in groups, including academia. It is a very practical way to see the world.

My oversimplified version of a Community of Practice is this:

- When two or more people interact regularly, a community exists.
- When that community operates for any length of time there are several things that develop which aid in the interaction within the community:
  - Patterns of behavior form norms
  - Boundaries form determining who is in the community and who is not
  - Levels of expertise arise as some are better at specific tasks than others
  - Insider language forms as shortcuts for communication. Outsiders to this community may or may not understand the meaning even if the words used are common
  - Reifications also arise. These are physical representations of the practices, language, and norms of the community
Related Content

Developing Self-Regulation Skills in Virtual Worlds: An Educational Scenario Applied in Second Life
[www.igi-global.com/article/developing-self-regulation-skills-virtual/65739?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/developing-self-regulation-skills-virtual/65739?camid=4v1a)

“If Many Were Involved”: University Student Self-Interest and Engagement in a Social Bookmarking Activity
[www.igi-global.com/article/many-were-involved/74171?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/many-were-involved/74171?camid=4v1a)
Web-Based Simulations for the Training of Mathematics Teachers
www.igi-global.com/chapter/web-based-simulations-training-mathematics/75279?camid=4v1a

Assessment Activities in Massive Open On-Line Courses: Assessment Activities in MOOCs
www.igi-global.com/chapter/assessment-activities-in-massive-open-on-line-courses/237548?camid=4v1a