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Collaboration Tools in Virtual Educational Communities: A Case of the Paulo Freire Project for Critical Pedagogy

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to engage community members in the design and development processes of the Freire Project web site in order to assess their needs and preferences for collaboration tools in virtual communities. This study consisted of surveys taken by the participants of the Freire Project communities. The survey questionnaire investigated participants' familiarity with activities and preferences for certain web tools in order to improve collaboration on the Freire Project website. Participants favored web tools with only marginal differences to increase the member collaboration in wikis, blogs, RSS, and folksonomy. Using digital technology and web tools encourages members to be active participants in the communities' activities and creates new possibilities for the development of educational communities in online environments.

Key words: *virtual educational communities, collaboration tools, critical pedagogy.*

Introduction: Problem Statement

The Paulo and Nita Freire International Project for Critical Pedagogy (referred to henceforth as *the Freire Project*) is dedicated to building an international critical community which works to promote social justice in a variety of cultural contexts, and is committed to conducting and sharing critical research in social, political, and educational areas. It also promotes research in critical pedagogy and brings together local and international educators (see details at <http://freire.mcgill.ca>).