

## WHAT MAJOR SEARCH ENGINES LIKE GOOGLE, YAHOO AND BING NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT TEACHERS IN THE UK?

By

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This article briefly outlines the current major search engines approach to teachers' web searching. The aim of this article is to make Web searching easier for teachers when searching for relevant online teaching materials, in general, and UK teacher practitioners at primary, secondary and post-compulsory levels, in particular. Therefore, major search engines are strongly recommended to design and develop personalised search tools for teachers in addition to carrying out extensive studies on teachers' online searching needs and preferences in order to fully achieve search engine personalisation for individual teachers.*

*Keywords: Information Needs, Online Searching, Search Behaviours, Search Engines, Teacher Practitioners, Web Personalisation.*

As an individual teacher and researcher working in an UK educational settings, the author has done research on teachers' online search behaviours and information needs for the last ten years. The author's 2014 prediction was for major search engines like Google to add a new search link on their toolbar called something like 'Google Teacher'. In fact, after the introduction of 'Google Scholar', the author was pretty sure that 'Google Teacher' would be the next move taken.

In the author's view, current major search engines have an approach which is mainly focused on teaching Educators and students how to use their educational search tools, as well as informing them the best search practices. However, they have not yet fully achieved search engine personalisation for individual teachers. While the approach taken by search engines provides a positive and useful move for teachers and the learning needs of their students, it currently does not make Web searching easier for individual teachers in the United Kingdom when searching for relevant online teaching materials at primary, secondary and post-compulsory levels.

Web personalisation can be adopted as a proposed new approach or possible solution to the technical barriers of individual teachers. For example, this would include search engine developers working on designing search tools that can locate, store, share, create and or re-use online

resources for individual teachers to use in their classroom teaching.

Major search engines like Google, Yahoo and Bing need to acknowledge the fact that, teachers have different online information needs and search behaviours compared to the general public. By designing and developing personalised search tools for individual teachers, they can take the next step in pioneering the future personalised online teaching material for students. Hence, in order to make Web searching easier for teachers in general, there should be extensive studies on individual teachers' online searching needs and preferences.

In the year 2013, the author carried out a case study of 75 UK teacher practitioners at primary, secondary and post-compulsory levels. The purpose of this study was to investigate the search options and features teachers commonly use and prefer to have when personalising their online search for teaching resources. The results of this study identified twelve search options and features, that are mostly used by teachers when personalising their online search. Search option such as 'Subject', 'Age Group', 'Resource Type', 'Free and/ Paid resources', 'Search results language' were listed in order of popularity. Furthermore, search features that can 'Store search options selected by individual teachers and their returned results' and 'Search via popular or other known educational websites' were

highlighted in this present study.

Findings from this study offer a model of teachers' Web information needs and search behaviours. This information can be useful for the UK Government, teacher trainers and search engine designers to gain an insight into the information needs and search behaviours of teachers when searching for online teaching resources.

This study provided an initial and important step towards understanding the information needs and search behaviours of individual teachers, working in an UK educational setting. Finally, with the findings from future studies, the author hopes to see major structural developments in the design of a search engine, that would include a personalised search tool for individual teachers to use. This could ultimately make Web searching easier and efficient for teachers around the World.

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