

## Crawling in the Virtual Environment: Prospective Teachers' Usage of *Google* Search Engine

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### Suggested Citation:

Şahin, A., Çermik, H., & Doğan, B. (2009). Crawling in the virtual environment: Prospective teachers' usage of *Google* search engine. *Eğitim Araştırmaları - Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 35, 77-92.

### Abstract

*Problem Statement:* The Internet is an important source whereby users attempt to meet their need of information through using one of the popular search engines. Likewise, research studies demonstrate that students and prospective teachers often visit the Internet to locate the information they need. This circumstance brings to mind the question of whether the users are equipped with the required knowledge and skills to use a search engine of their choice. When the literature is analyzed, it is seen that the issue is overly neglected.

*Purpose of Study:* The purpose of this research is to identify prospective teachers' proficiencies in using a search engine. It first attempts to identify the preferred information sources by prospective teachers. Then it aims to discover whether prospective teachers are aware of the basic *Google* commands and how their awareness changes depending on the year spent in a teacher education program.

*Methods:* Qualitative survey methodology was used in this study. Participants were 328 prospective teachers from Pamukkale University, Faculty of Education, the Primary School Teaching Program (1-5) in the Department of Elementary Education. The data were gathered through using a questionnaire including open-ended questions formed by the researchers. The gathered qualitative data were analyzed by employing content analysis technique. Findings were visualized through using figures.

*Findings and Results:* Findings reveal that prospective teachers prefer to use the Internet as their primary information source, which is followed by printed materials, living sources, and personal experience. Despite this, the majority of the participants are either uninformed of *Google* search information or are attempting to use casual methods of searching for

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information. Upon investigating the change based on participants' grade levels, it is seen that the teacher education process has created a very limited impact on prospective teachers' knowledge of *Google* commands.

*Recommendations:* Findings show the need for teacher education programs to open courses on the Internet and for researchers to have a thorough investigation of prospective teachers' experiences with the Internet and search engines.

*Keywords:* Information technologies, search engine, teacher education, literacy