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ORIGINAL PAPER

Trends and Topics in Educational Technology, 2026 Edition

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Abstract
In this continuation of a series, we provide an analysis of scholarship trends over the last five years in the field of educational technology, drawing from the Scopus and ERIC databases. We report an analysis of the keywords reported for articles during this timeframe, including trends about which keywords are rising or falling in importance. We also report the top-cited papers, scholars, and institutions. Finally, we share findings about the impact of open access on the field. We interpret these results, including the seismic impact that generative artificial intelligence has had on the scholarship of the field, and conclude with recommendations for future research.

Introduction

Research in the fields of learning experience design and educational technology is expanding rapidly with thousands of articles published annually in hundreds of journals. This is especially challenging in our discipline, which serves as a metafield that crosses over into many other disciplines—essentially any area where instruction happens. Because of how much research is produced by our discipline, it can be difficult to stay abreast of the current issues in the field. Trend analysis is a strategy that can assist researchers by being a first and ongoing step in mapping and understanding the discipline (Kim et al., 2025) and can also assist practitioners whose jobs require them to be up to date.

In this paper, we attempt to shed some light on trends in the field through a research trend analysis of Scopus and ERIC—two of the leading databases for educational research. Our work builds off of previous analyses conducted for *TechTrends* (Allman et al., 2023, 2024; Kimmons, 2020; Kimmons & Rosenberg, 2022; Kimmons et al., 2021, 2025) and the *Educational Technology Media Yearbook* (West et al., 2025). Our overarching goal in this project is to address the following questions:

1. What are the most popular topics being studied?
2. What are the leading papers that are being read and cited?
3. Who are the leading scholars and institutions?

We then also asked a targeted research question about open access as follows:

4. What is the state and citation impact of research openness in the field?

Scopus Analysis

As in previous years, we began our analysis with extracting all Elsevier Scopus Search Application Programming Interface (API) article results for targeted educational technology journals selected in last year's study (Kimmons et al., 2025), which was adapted from Perkins and Lowenthal (2016; $n = 98$; see Kimmons, 2025). This resulted in 10,457 article results, including article titles, authorships, affiliations, citation counts, and other information, which we temporarily stored in a relational MySQL database for processing. We then developed and used a combination of NodeJS scripts and SQL queries to generate desired results.

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In some cases, we also desired to compare 2025 results with previous years and collected similar data beginning in 2021 (40,411 total articles).

Top Keyword Topics and Changes Over Time

Perhaps not surprising, educational applications of artificial intelligence and large language models dwarfed other major topics in the research literature in 2025. Virtual, augmented reality, and metaverse were also major topics, as were online learning and more generic topics such as education and educational technology. Motivation (or engagement in some cases), self-efficacy, self-regulation, and cognitive load were the most frequently cited theoretical constructs being studied. Also of note is that more "niche" topics such as computational thinking and gamification/game-based learning were strongly represented. It is also interesting that over two-and-a-half years after the World Health Organization officially declared the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, it still remained a major topic in the research literature. Human-computer interaction and user experience were also well-represented, perhaps representing a recent focus in Learner Experience Design (Tawfik et al., 2022). It is also noteworthy that the only research methodologies mentioned among the leading keywords were structural equation modeling and machine learning.

In order to determine trends over time, we also looked at the changes in the keyword listing over five years, and in Table 1 we report not only the ranking of keywords in 2025 but also the change in one year and the changes over 5 years. These were then ranked as either "winners" or "losers" over the past year and 5 years (see Table 2), with winners representing those that improved in rank the most and losers representing those that fell in rank the most. Again, it is remarkable not just to see how popular research related to artificial intelligence was in 2025, but how commanding and swiftly this topic took over the research literature. This may raise questions about whether other research is being ignored in the frenzy to study all things related to artificial intelligence

Table 1 Top 20 Most Frequently Used Topical Keywords of Articles (2025)

Keyword	Total	Citations	Citations per Article	1-year Rank Change	5-year Rank Change
artificial intelligence	885	4,780	5.4	0	+8
higher education	667	2,292	3.4	0	-1
generative artificial intelligence	566	3,613	6.4	+6	+8,693
chatgpt	370	2,872	7.8	+1	+13,285
virtual reality	348	741	2.1	-1	+1
social media	250	695	2.8	0	-2
online learning	245	555	2.3	-4	-4
augmented reality	216	512	2.4	+3	+9
large language models	211	1,023	4.8	+30	+13,279
machine learning	156	292	1.9	-2	+3
motivation	155	585	3.8	+3	-3
computational thinking	140	229	1.6	+1	-1
gamification	140	264	1.9	+6	+8
self-efficacy	137	415	3.0	+6	+10
chatbots	136	777	5.7	+6	+194
self-regulated learning	127	479	3.8	-1	+10
COVID-19, pandemic	121	172	1.4	-12	-17
stem	120	263	2.2	+5	+1
human-computer interaction	119	286	2.4	+13	+96

Table 2 Top 10 "Winners" and "Losers" in Keyword Rank Changes

Keyword	1-year Rank Change	5-year Rank Change	2021 Rank	2025 Rank
		Winners		
chatgpt	+1	+13,285	-	4
large language models	+30	+13,279	-	10
metaverse	+11	+13,259	-	30
human-ai collaboration	+641	+13,195	-	94
generative artificial intelligence	+6	+8,693	8,696	3
ai literacy	+70	+5,086	5,125	39
tiktok	-31	+3,911	4,040	129
human-ai interaction	+224	+1,051	1,146	95
academic integrity	+48	+846	968	122
behavioral intention	+189	+783	887	104
		...		
moocs	-26	-57	11	68
secondary education	-33	-60	37	97
design	+25	-63	52	115
distance learning	-16	-64	14	78
teacher professional development	+13	-71	40	111
online teaching	-141	-168	49	217
pedagogical issues	+48	-189	45	234
open educational resources	-159	-210	43	253
learning management system	-219	-278	56	334
ict	-285	-381	41	422
		Losers		

in education, or perhaps it is evidence as some have claimed that artificial intelligence can potentially create a "renaissance" (Ginsberg & Zhao, 2025) that changes the fields of educational technology and education. It is interesting to note that among the keywords that saw the biggest jump in usage, several are related to developing "literacy" with how to use artificial intelligence or what the interaction should be between humans and AI. This indicates the field is still wrestling with what the addition of artificial intelligence to education will really mean for the work of teachers, students, parents, instructional designers, and administrators. Academic integrity is also seeing a resurgence in the keywords ranking, as is misinformation and anthropormophism, which suggests that as AI technologies disrupt education, they are triggering philosophical and deeply human considerations related to being, literacy, morality, etc.

Meanwhile our data show a decline in interest in researching mobile learning and technology integration, perhaps indicating that at this point, learning assisted by mobile devices and educational technology is to some degree ubiquitous. Similarly, e-learning, distance education, and online learning have seen major drops, perhaps as they have become more normalized as simply "learning," wherein these technologies become commonplace and expected forms of instruction that do not require designation.

Additionally, many keywords seemed to co-occur with others at a high frequency, which are represented as a few dominant clusters in the provided network plot (Fig. 1).

Influential Articles

Listing the most commonly cited articles is potentially a limiting feature of a paper such as this, due to the potential to see the "rich get richer" as scholars keep citing the already well known papers. To identify which papers are trending and having an impact, we list in Table 3 the most highly cited articles from the last 5 years. However, we encourage scholars in doing their own research to look beyond these top papers for the most relevant articles for any study. It is interesting in these top 20 articles that all but four are about artificial intelligence, and two of the remaining four are about COVID-19 education. This showcases again the hold that generative AI has on current research and the disruption this is having on the field as all other research is being subsumed in the push to discuss AI. In addition, many of these papers discuss frameworks for understanding how to use and teach AI, showing how scholars in our field are wrestling with these fundamental questions.

Lead Authors

In this section we report the most represented lead authors over the last five years (cf., Table 4). While many productive scholars are often not in the lead position due to mentoring students, are early career scholars, or publish in other venues (e.g., conference proceedings in technology fields), this list may reveal some of the top scholars in our discipline.

Countries and Institutions

The most productive countries in the field included China (2,531 articles), the United States (2,197), the United

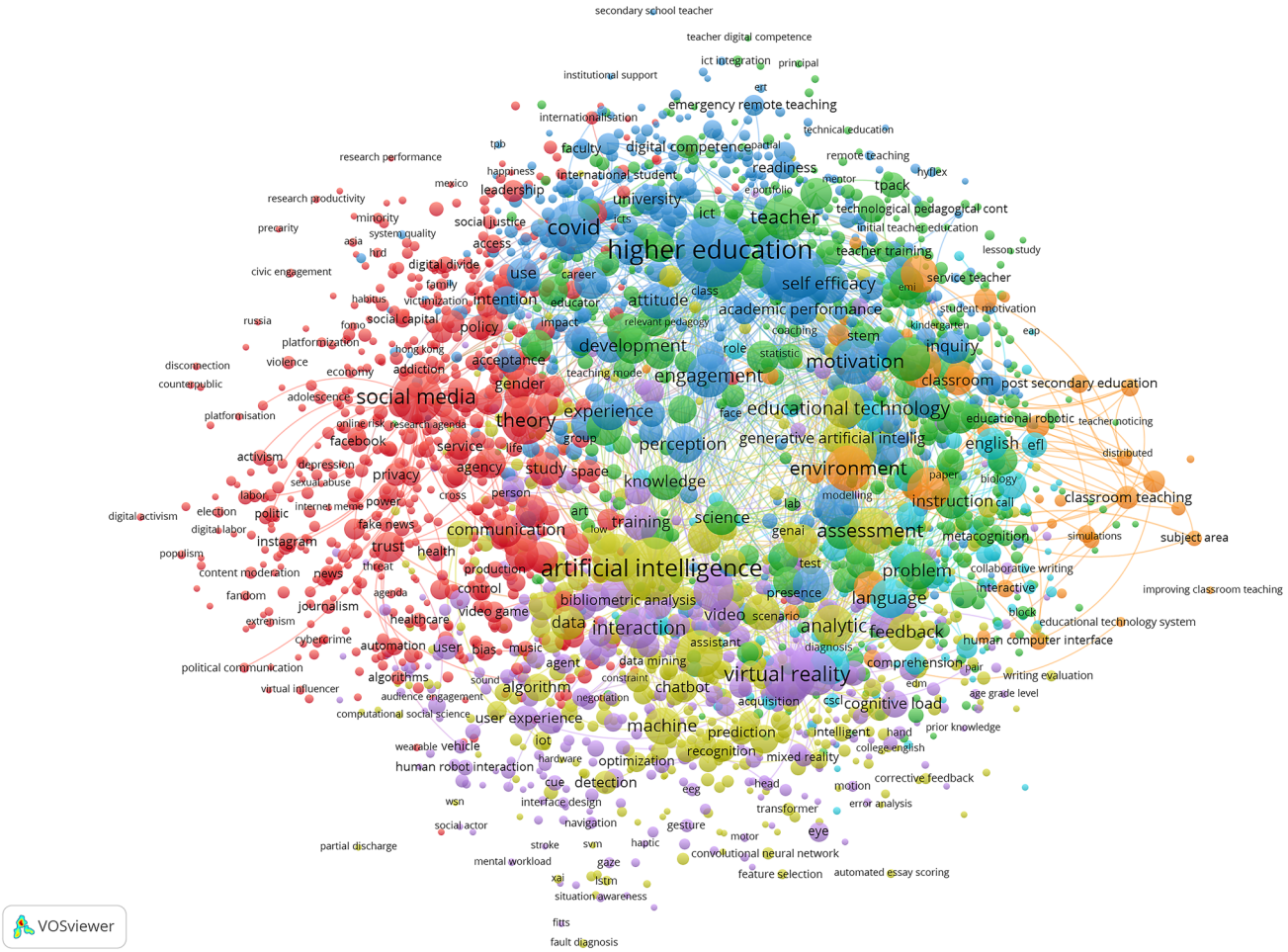

Fig. 1 Network Plot of Keyword Co-Occurrence. Note. Size of node represents frequency of keyword occurrence while color of node denotes cluster membership. Nodes of the same color co-occur more strongly with one other than with nodes of different colors. Thickness of edges (lines) indicate strength of association (co-occurence). Analysis done using VOSviewer (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010)

Table 3 Most-cited Articles Authored in the Last 5 Years

Year		Journal Title	DOI	Citations	Open Access
2023	Covid-19 pandemic and online learning: the challenges and opportunities	Interactive Learning Environments	https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2020.1813180	1,443	no
2024	Chatting and cheating: Ensuring academic integrity in the era of ChatGPT	Innovations in Education and Teaching International	https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2023.2190148	1,407	yes
2023	Students' voices on generative AI: perceptions, benefits, and challenges in higher education	International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education	https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-023-00411-8	1,159	yes
2021	Conceptualizing AI literacy: An exploratory review	Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2021.100041	1,070	yes
2023	What if the devil is my guardian angel: ChatGPT as a case study of using chatbots in education	Smart Learning Environments	https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-023-00237-x	1,053	yes
2021	The effects of explainability and causability on perception, trust, and acceptance: Implications for explainable AI	International Journal of Human Computer Studies	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhcs.2020.102551	921	no
2023	Artificial intelligence in higher education: the state of the field	International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education	https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-023-00392-8	884	yes
2023	Examining Science Education in ChatGPT: An Exploratory Study of Generative Artificial Intelligence	Journal of Science Education and Technology	https://doi.org/10.1007/s10956-023-10039-y	873	yes
2023	A comprehensive AI policy education framework for university teaching and learning	International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education	https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-023-00408-3	846	yes
2023	Systematic literature review on opportunities, challenges, and future research recommendations of artificial intelligence in education	Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2022.100118	701	yes
2021	What makes an AI device human-like? The role of interaction quality, empathy and perceived psychological anthropomorphic characteristics in the acceptance of artificial intelligence in the service industry	Computers in Human Behavior	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2021.106855	683	no
2021	COVID-19 and digital disruption in UK universities: afflictions and affordances of emergency online migration	Higher Education: International Journal of Higher Education and Educational Planning	https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00561-y	680	yes
2024	A SWOT analysis of ChatGPT: Implications for educational practice and research	Innovations in Education and Teaching International	https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2023.2195846	678	yes
2021	Revealing the theoretical basis of gamification: A systematic review and analysis of theory in research on gamification, serious games and game-based learning	Computers in Human Behavior	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2021.106963	675	yes
2022	What is XR? Towards a Framework for Augmented and Virtual Reality	Computers in Human Behavior	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2022.107289	671	yes
2021	Chatbots applications in education: A systematic review	Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2021.100033	624	yes

Table 3 (continued)

Year		Journal Title	DOI	Citations	Open Access
2023	Revolutionizing education with AI: Exploring the transformative potential of ChatGPT	Contemporary Educational Technology	https://doi.org/10.30935/cedtech/13152	612	yes
2022	Ethics of AI in Education: Towards a Community-Wide Framework	International Journal of Artificial Intelligence in Education	https://doi.org/10.1007/s40593-021-00239-1	610	yes
2023	Ethical principles for artificial intelligence in education	Education and Information Technologies	https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-022-11316-w	597	yes
2022	Definition, roles, and potential research issues of the metaverse in education: An artificial intelligence perspective	Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2022.100082	588	yes

Kingdom (765), Taiwan (553), Hong Kong (546), Turkey (537), Australia (518), and Germany (499), but 140 countries were represented in total (cf., Table 5). Due to size differences between countries and differing higher education structures, some countries had a very high number of articles per institution (18.8 in Hong Kong), while others had a very low number per institution (1.9 in the United States). In addition, we acknowledge that different countries incentivize publications and citations disparately, fund research teams disproportionately, and define university size differently. Within the United States, leading institutions included the following: University of Florida, Pennsylvania State University, Purdue University, Michigan State, University of North Texas, and University of Georgia.

ERIC Analysis

To complement the Scopus analysis, we also queried the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) database, which is supported by the Institute of Education Sciences within the U.S. Department of Education. According to the ERIC website, "ERIC is a comprehensive, easy-to-use, searchable, Internet-based bibliographic and full-text database of education research and information" (ERIC, 2026). Helpfully, it also includes an API to query its contents. Journals and other sources are eligible to be indexed; more information about ERIC's selection criteria are available on the ERIC website. At present, there are millions of articles with metadata in its database, and many hundreds of thousands with PDFs. We used the metadata for this article—articles' title and journal, author(s), author/article-provided keyword(s), abstract, and number of citations, among other outputs.

A feature of ERIC pertinent to this analysis is that it has a granular thesaurus with around 4,500 descriptors (and thousands of synonyms; ERIC, 2026). One such descriptor is Educational Technology[1]. The thesaurus suggests to users to use this term in place of both "Edtech" and "Instructional Technology". Though there are other similar terms we could have used, for the purpose of reviewing research on the topic of educational technology, using this term balanced between the tradeoffs of more general terms (e.g., "Technology") and those that are more specific (e.g., "Assistive Technology").

First, we queried all articles labeled with the educational technology descriptor with publication dates from 2021 to 2025, resulting in 11,693 articles for further analyses. To analyze keywords, we used both author/article-provided keywords and keywords generated by Llama3.2:3b from

[1] https://eric.ed.gov/?qt=educational+technology&ti=Educational+Technology.

Table 4 Top 20 Most Represented Lead Authors by Article Count (5 Years)

Name	Country	Lead Author Articles	Citations	Citation Rate	h5 Index
Hwang G.J.	Taiwan	39	6,905	33.5	17
Kong S.C.	Hong Kong	31	1,133	32.4	16
Pi Z.	China	28	722	12.7	13
Shadiev R.	China	25	992	19.1	12
Hong J.C.	China	24	770	15.1	10
Ouyang F.	China	22	2,160	54.0	12
Çakiroğlu Ü.	Turkey	22	327	11.3	8
Tang H.	United States	19	508	12.7	11
Kohnke L.	Hong Kong	18	779	33.9	13
Ng D.T.K.	Hong Kong	17	3,469	123.9	15
Sun L.	China	17	562	31.2	12
Zhu M.	United States	17	489	16.3	11
Zheng L.	China	17	584	29.2	11
Chen X.	China	17	1,528	76.4	9
Chiu T.K.F.	Hong Kong	16	4,953	110.1	15
Saqr M.	Sweden	15	1,084	32.8	13
Ateş H.	Turkey	15	303	16.8	10
Hsu T.C.	Taiwan	15	371	23.2	10
Yildiz Durak H.	Turkey	15	539	20.7	9
Chang C.C.	Taiwan	15	217	10.3	8

Table 5 Top 20 Most Productive Institutions by Article Count (5 Years)

Name	Country	Articles	Citations	Citations per Article
The Education University of Hong Kong	Hong Kong	496	10,961	22.1
Beijing Normal University	China	472	8,883	18.8
The University of Hong Kong	Hong Kong	446	13,853	31.1
Central China Normal University	China	423	6,577	15.5
National Taiwan University of Science and Technology	Taiwan	391	9,160	23.4
National Taiwan Normal University	Taiwan	357	7,268	20.4
Chinese University of Hong Kong	Hong Kong	321	10,342	32.2
Monash University	Australia	302	8,355	27.7
University of Florida	United States	248	4,680	18.9
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	Hong Kong	221	2,737	12.4
East China Normal University	China	216	3,646	16.9
Pennsylvania State University	United States	202	2,630	13.0
Purdue University	United States	193	3,355	17.4
National Institute of Education	Singapore	190	3,408	17.9
Universiti Sains Malaysia	Malaysia	185	2,383	12.9
Michigan State University	United States	183	3,497	19.1
University of North Texas	United States	179	3,044	17.0
University of Georgia	United States	169	2,206	13.1
National Taichung University of Education	Taiwan	168	1,734	10.3
Tsinghua University	China	166	1,877	11.3

Table 6 ERIC Educational Technology Article Keywords

	2021		2025		
Keyword	**Rank**	**Count**	**Rank**	**Count**	**Change**
artificial intelligence	82	79	3	316	+79 ranks
literature reviews	813	9	51	50	+762 ranks
gamification	486	17	56	47	+430 ranks
generative ai	N/A	0	114	30	New
natural language processing	769	10	91	36	+678 ranks
personalized learning	594	13	79	37	+515 ranks
chatgpt	N/A	0	164	21	New
influence of technology	505	16	84	36	+421 ranks
career and technical education	1701	4	143	24	+1,558 ranks
algorithms	2803	2	165	21	+2,638 ranks
artificial intelligence in education	918	8	137	26	+781 ranks
generative artificial intelligence	N/A	0	206	18	New
ethics	267	30	57	47	+210 ranks
bibliometrics	609	13	117	30	+492 ranks
meta analysis	843	9	131	26	+712 ranks
digital literacy	199	38	48	52	+151 ranks
affordances	265	30	64	44	+201 ranks
simulated environment	1,021	7	162	21	+859 ranks
large language models	N/A	0	285	13	New
technological advancement	640	12	144	24	+496 ranks

articles' abstracts. Table 6 shows the keywords that increased in their relative frequency (counts). At the top of the relative rankings is artificial intelligence, individual instruction, and gamification (alongside more general keywords, such as educational research, educational innovation, and literature reviews).

Similar to the Scopus analysis, in Table 7 we see a striking decrease in topics related to the COVID-19 pandemic and related terms (e.g., school closings), along with telecommunications, internet, access to education, and online learning. Overall, these results reveal strong similarities to the Scopus results and provide an additional layer of trustworthiness to the analysis.

Open Access Publishing Practices

In addition, we analyzed publication practices in educational technology research using Scopus data of 40,411 publications in educational technology journals in the past 5 years to examine openness state and discern its impact on citation counts. Table 8 shows the number of articles each year, with a rapid rise from 2023 onward and doubling the output from 2021 to 2025. The percentage of review articles has remained fairly constant. When triangulated with the keywords analysis above, this trend is driven by the growth of research on generative AI, sparked by the public release of ChatGPT in Nov 2022. Because the number of journals in our dataset is fixed at 98 educational technology journals throughout the whole time period, the increase in number of articles is driven by an increase in the number of articles being produced per journal per year.

Increasing amounts of educational research are being produced, but to what extent are these openly distributed for all to read and use? To address this question of dissemination practice, we quantified the percentage of publications identified as open access, where articles are freely available on a publisher's platform. We found a seemingly downward trend from 48.6% in 2021 to 45% in 2025 (Table 8). This prevalence is marginally higher

Table 7 ERIC Educational Technology Article Keywords - Decreasing Counts

	2021		2025		
Keyword	**Rank**	**Count**	**Rank**	**Count**	**Change**
covid-19	3	1,103	16	96	-13 ranks
pandemics	4	1,094	18	94	-14 ranks
technology uses in education	1	1,601	1	842	Same
online courses	5	845	20	88	-15 ranks
foreign countries	2	1,408	2	652	Same
school closing	7	702	173	20	-166 ranks
teaching methods	6	771	10	162	-4 ranks
distance education	9	603	17	95	-8 ranks
covid-19 pandemic	11	506	78	37	-67 ranks
student attitudes	8	632	5	223	+3 ranks
barriers	10	556	11	152	-1 ranks
teacher attitudes	12	464	9	165	+3 ranks
program effectiveness	15	410	12	139	+3 ranks
electronic learning	13	458	6	190	+7 ranks
college students	14	431	7	186	+7 ranks
higher education	16	404	8	180	+8 ranks
college faculty	19	265	32	65	-13 ranks
access to computers	22	240	60	45	-38 ranks
technological literacy	18	317	15	123	+3 ranks
telecommunications	24	218	130	27	-106 ranks

Table 8 Educational Technology Articles Per Year and Open Access Status

# of articles	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
	5,871	6,254	7,212	9,515	11,139
% review articles	2.0%	2.9%	3.1%	2.7%	2.7%
# of articles per journal	59.9	63.8	73.6	97.1	113.7
% open access	48.6	49.3	53.4	48.3	45.0

Review article status follows Scopus' classification, encompassing various forms of reviews (not including meta-analysis). Open access status follows Scopus' classification

than the most recent figure from the broader educational research field (Sezgin et al., 2022) and suggests that educational technology research, as covered by our dataset, is about as openly published as other areas of educational research, with a potential decline in openness in the past few years.

Open access has been argued to be more impactful given its free availability to end users (Piwowar et al., 2018), such as researchers and educators (Veletsianos and Kimmons 2012a, b). We assessed the impact of open access on citation counts, a traditional metric of research impact. A negative binomial generalized linear mixed model (GLMM) was applied, appropriate for the over-dispersed, skewed nature of the outcome measure of citation counts. We added covariates of article age, article type, number of authors, journal source, and topic. The latter was identified via unsupervised modeling using BERTopic (Grootendorst, 2022). All predictors were fixed effects, except for publication source and topic, which were treated as random effects. Table 9 presents the GLMM rate ratios (RR; exponentiated regression coefficients), which can be interpreted as the change in expected citation counts associated with a one-unit increase in the predictor, holding other predictors constant.

Through our analysis, we discovered that open-access articles received 46% more citations (RR = 1.46) than closed-access articles. Article age (90% citation advantage per year) and review article type (93% citation advantage relative to primary article) played the most important roles in citations. However, there was also substantial heterogeneity in article citations depending on the journal source. Overall,

Table 9 Predictors of Article Citation Counts

Fixed effects	Rate ratio (RR)
Article age	1.90***
Open access (ref: closed access)	1.46***
Number of authors	1.03***
Review article type (ref: primary article)	1.93***
Other article types (ref: primary article)	0.53***
Random effects	**Multiplicative difference**
Journal source	2.27
Topic	1.37

our analysis suggests that open access status in educational technology research strongly impacts subsequent citation counts, adjusting for other numerous factors that also play a role.

Discussion

The obvious topical takeaway from this analysis is unsurprising and builds off of trends that have been visible over the past few years: AI has rapidly pushed out other topical categories and dominates our scholarship. This swift narrowing in on AI reflects the larger cultural zeitgeist around AI but also may reflect an opportunity cost in terms of loss of advancement in other areas (such as decreased emphasis on design, openness, social media, etc.). An initial analysis of AI-related articles in our dataset revealed that most studies were qualitative and generally described loosely as "case studies," with relatively few articles addressing AI ethics (beyond student misuse), development, or large-scale or generalizable effects. This may suggest a rush to simply try AI in various settings without measured consideration for costs or social implications and little attempt to actually shape the development of AI itself. That is, educational technology seems to be trying to rapidly apply AI to education rather than to shape AI's broader future. In a similar way, most of the work regarding AI in the dataset focused on LLMs and chatbots (ChatGPT in particular), which suggests a very narrow and limiting view of AI that ignores many of its other current and emergent forms, such as predictive AI, computer vision, RAG, and local/edge AI.

There also continues to be a marked change in who is conducting research in educational technology, with ever increasing numbers of articles being produced in eastern and Asian countries, including China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. In 2021, for instance, the U.S. outproduced China in terms of article counts at a rate of 3-to-1, and the U.K. outproduced Taiwan and Hong Kong combined. But in 2025, China outproduced the U.S., and Taiwan and Hong Kong are catching up to the U.K. Given that 140 countries were represented in the literature in 2025, up from 122 in 2021, this may represent increased representation of diverse perspectives and also ongoing recentering of scholarly leadership in the field away from the Anglosphere. However, it should also be noted that among top-producing countries, there are few appearing highly on the Fragile States Index (FSI, 2024). Of the top-20-producing countries, China is the highest ranked fragile state, and it rests in the middle of the pack of all nations at 99. This suggests that expansion of representation remains largely centralized in economically advantaged countries.

Additionally, our analyses suggest a dramatic increase in educational technology publication numbers. When combined with recent perspectives shared by educational technology journal editors of a large increase in submissions in the past few years (Allison, 2026; Lewin et al., 2025), educational technology research seems to be on a rapid upward trajectory. It is unclear if the current trend can continue without some form of change or innovation in review and publication processes to maintain quality, fairness, and sustainability. Moreover, despite the clear citation advantage, potentially larger proportions of this rapidly expanding knowledge base are behind paywalls, limiting dissemination and reach. The disconnect between prevalence and benefit likely has many explanations, including the generally high costs of open access and lack of institutional mandates unlike in other fields (Roehrig et al., 2018). Recent transformative agreements between institutions and publishers supporting cost structures that do not financially burden authors may be the way forward. There are other emerging practices in educational technology research such as open data, pre-registration, and AI-assisted writing, which are more challenging to quantify at this point. Future analysis of these practices would illuminate how our field continues to evolve.

Conclusion

In this paper we report an analysis of publication patterns in the field of educational technology over the last year and five year periods in the Scopus and ERIC databases. We discovered that research on AI has completely overtaken other research in the field, but that most of this research is more surface-level application of AI rather than deep development of theory or AI tools themselves. In addition, we noted the strong increase in publications on educational technology, particularly internationally as China within just this 5 year period has overtaken the United States for highest numbers of publications. Finally, we noted the positive impact of open access on citation patterns, but

also that slightly fewer articles were published open access last year than in previous years.

These findings lead to several conclusions and calls for improvement within our field. First, we need more research that looks critically at generative AI and its effects on a wide range of human learning and psychological outcomes, and we need larger and more generalizable studies about AI rather than small-scale case studies. Second, if we believe that openness is a moral imperative to improve access to knowledge, then we need strategies to improve the percentage of articles being published open access. Third, research reviews and studies need to continue to consider implications beyond the Anglosphere, as more research in the field is increasingly centered in other parts of the world.

Data Availability Datasets and further details are provided in the online supplement at https://edtechbooks.org/trends_supplements and upon request.

Declarations

Competing interests None.

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