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EDITORIAL

Twenty-five Years of RELATEC: Scientific Contribution and the Transformation of Educational Technology

Veinticinco años de RELATEC: contribución científica y transformación de la Tecnología Educativa

Jesús Valverde-Berrocoso

Abstract: This article introduces the special section commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Latin American Journal of Educational Technology - RELATEC and reviews its contribution to the consolidation of Educational Technology in the Ibero-American context. First, it presents the journal's editorial and thematic evolution since its foundation, highlighting its shift from early debates on ICT integration, e-learning, virtual platforms and multimedia materials to more complex issues related to digital competence, inclusion, digital citizenship, open science, open education and generative artificial intelligence. Second, it analyses RELATEC's identity as a diamond open access journal, with no fees for authors or readers, and its alignment with the principles of bibliodiversity, transparency, knowledge reuse and public scholarly communication. Third, it examines the journal's consolidation as a quality scientific publication, recognised by the FECYT Seal of Quality and indexed in evaluation and dissemination systems such as ESCI, DOAJ, ERIHPlus, Dialnet, Latindex and Journal Citation Reports. The article also presents the contributions included in the special section, coordinated by Manuel Area-Moreira and Bartolomé Rubia-Avi, and authored by leading scholars in the field of Educational Technology. Overall, the special section offers a critical reading of the current state of the field and outlines RELATEC's main future challenges: internationalisation, open science, sustainability of the diamond model, methodological quality and responsible research assessment.

Keywords: RELATEC, Educational Technology, Open Science, Diamond Open Access, Scientific Journals, Generative Artificial Intelligence, Digital Competence.

Resumen: Este artículo introduce la sección especial conmemorativa del 25 aniversario de la Revista Latinoamericana de Tecnología Educativa - RELATEC y revisa su contribución a la consolidación de la Tecnología Educativa en el ámbito iberoamericano. En primer lugar, se presenta la evolución editorial y temática de la revista desde sus inicios, destacando su tránsito desde los primeros debates sobre incorporación de TIC, e-learning, plataformas virtuales y materiales multimedia hacia problemáticas más complejas vinculadas con competencia digital, inclusión, ciudadanía digital, ciencia abierta, educación abierta e inteligencia artificial generativa. En segundo lugar, se analiza la identidad de RELATEC como revista de acceso abierto diamante, sin costes para autores ni lectores, y su alineación con los principios de bibliodiversidad, transparencia, reutilización del conocimiento y comunicación científica pública. En tercer lugar, se examina su consolidación como revista científica de calidad, reconocida por el Sello FECYT e incluida en sistemas de indexación y evaluación como ESCI, DOAJ, ERIHPlus, Dialnet, Latindex y Journal Citation Reports. El texto presenta, además, los artículos que integran la sección especial, coordinada por Manuel Area-Moreira y Bartolomé Rubia-Avi, en la que participan autoras y autores de referencia en Tecnología Educativa. En conjunto, la sección ofrece una lectura crítica del estado actual del campo y proyecta los principales desafíos de RELATEC: internacionalización, ciencia abierta, sostenibilidad del modelo diamante, calidad metodológica y evaluación responsable.

Palabras-clave: RELATEC, Tecnología Educativa, Ciencia Abierta, Acceso Abierto Diamante, Revistas Científicas, Inteligencia Artificial Generativa, Competencia Digital.

1. Introduction

The commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Revista Latinoamericana de Tecnología Educativa – RELATEC constitutes a particularly significant occasion to review the trajectory of a publication that has contributed to the construction of the field of Educational Technology in the Ibero-American context. Since its inception, RELATEC has defined itself as a biannual scientific journal, peer reviewed through a double-blind system, edited by the University of Extremadura, and devoted to the dissemination of research on Educational Technology, with a clear Latin American, multilingual, and international vocation.

The history of RELATEC can be read as a history running parallel to the evolution of Educational Technology itself. In its early years, the journal addressed debates related to the incorporation of ICT into educational systems, online learning, e-learning platforms, multimedia materials, and the first experiences of technology-mediated innovation. Over time, its scope expanded towards issues of greater pedagogical, institutional, and sociocultural complexity: technology integration policies, teachers' digital competence, instructional design, digital objects and resources, assessment in technology-enhanced environments, mobile learning, video games, virtual worlds, Web 2.0, open science and open education, generative artificial intelligence, and gaps in access, use, and participation. This broad range of topics corresponds to the journal's declared scope, which structures its specialization around online learning, the educational integration of technologies, the acceptance and adoption of emerging technologies, and digital learning environments.

The thematic evolution of RELATEC reflects the shift within the field from an initial concern with the instrumental incorporation of technologies towards a more complex understanding of digital education. Special issues and monographic sections are particularly relevant indicators of this evolution. In 2016, a monographic issue on digital citizenship was published; in 2017, a special issue addressed the transition from textbooks to digital educational materials; in 2020, a monographic issue focused on Educational Technology research supported by mixed methods; in 2023, a monographic issue examined the lessons learned from an unprecedented educational experience in Ibero-America after the pandemic, together with a special section devoted to open science in educational research; and, in 2025, a monographic issue focused on open science and open education.

This evolution makes it possible to identify at least five major thematic stages in RELATEC's trajectory: (1) initial educational digitalization and e-learning: studies on ICT, virtual platforms, multimedia, educational software, and online didactic communication; (2) curricular and institutional integration of technologies: analyses of policies, plans, programmes, good practices, and teacher training; (3) learning environments and digital culture: learning communities, Web 2.0, learning objects, virtual worlds, online collaboration, and digital materials; (4) digital competence, inclusion, and citizenship: teacher education, the digital divide, digital citizenship, accessibility, inclusion, and critical uses of technology; and (5) open science, open education, and artificial intelligence: open resources, open data, citizen science, generative AI, the metaverse, analytics, adaptive learning, and new ethical challenges.

Since its first issue, the journal has explicitly defined itself as a diamond open access journal. This means that its articles are freely available online and may be read, downloaded, copied, distributed, printed, searched, and used for lawful purposes without economic, legal, or technical barriers other than those inherent to internet access. RELATEC's adoption of this model contributes to democratizing access to scientific knowledge in Educational Technology. It also protects the academic community from publishing models based on article processing charges (APCs), which may generate inequalities among researchers, institutions, and countries. The diamond route is particularly important for areas such as Education and the Social Sciences, where project funding and the availability of resources to pay APCs are unequal and often limited.

However, open science cannot be reduced to the free availability of articles. UNESCO defines open science as a set of principles and practices aimed at making scientific research accessible to all, within an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable knowledge production system. In this regard, RELATEC has incorporated policies that broaden its commitment: the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence, the promotion of self-archiving, the recommendation to deposit supplementary materials and research data in institutional or subject-specific repositories, the use of persistent identifiers, and an orientation towards transparency, replicability, and knowledge reuse. RELATEC's recent inclusion in the Diamond Discovery Hub of the European Diamond Capacity Hub further reinforces this orientation.

Journal quality is an essential feature of great value to editors, authors, and readers. Through its editorial policy, institutional continuity, and presence in evaluation and indexing systems, RELATEC has progressively consolidated the rigour of peer review, editorial transparency, ethical compliance, regularity, internationalization, visibility, impact, preservation, openness, professionalization of processes, and the trust of the scientific community. For example, the FECYT Seal of Quality is one of the most relevant forms of recognition for Spanish scientific journals, and RELATEC has renewed it since 2016. RELATEC also declares its adherence to ethical standards, principles of transparency, and the good practices of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). In addition, the journal has developed a specific policy on gender equality and inclusion, including a commitment to a minimum representation of 40% women on editorial bodies and among reviewers, the recommendation to use inclusive language, and the full identification of authorship.

At the international level, RELATEC is included in Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), DOAJ, ERIHPlus, MIAR, Dialnet, Latindex, REDIB, EBSCO, IRESIE, Dulcinea, Paperity, REDINED, and other scientific information, evaluation, and dissemination systems. Its presence in ESCI is particularly significant because it places the journal within the Web of Science Core Collection. Inclusion in Journal Citation Reports further broadens RELATEC's exposure to international bibliometric indicators. Nevertheless, the excellence of a diamond journal does not lie solely in competing within global metrics, but in demonstrating that it is possible to adopt a form of scholarly communication that is rigorous, open, public, international, and socially committed.

2. Presentation of the Special Section

The special section commemorating RELATEC's 25th anniversary seeks to provide a space for academic and scientific reflection on the evolution, tensions, and current challenges of Educational Technology. Coordinated by the guest editors Manuel Area-Moreira (University of La Laguna) and Bartolomé Rubia-Avi (University of Valladolid), the section brings together contributions by authors whose trajectories have played a decisive role in consolidating the field in Spain and Ibero-America over recent decades. Manuel Area represents one of the central voices in the construction of the field in recent decades (Area-Moreira et al., 2016, 2023). Bartolomé Rubia has made a sustained contribution to innovation, collaborative learning, and educational technologies (Rubia-Avi, 2022a, 2022b).

The selection of invited authors gives the section a high level of scientific and academic quality. Jesús Salinas has been principal investigator of the Educational Technology Group at the University of the Balearic Islands, director of the UIB Institute for Educational Research and Innovation, co-director of the Interuniversity Master's Degree in Educational Technology, and coordinator of the Doctoral Programme in Educational Technology (Salinas Ibáñez et al., 2017; Salinas Ibáñez & Marín Juarros, 2019). María Paz Prendes, Professor at the University of Murcia, has produced especially relevant work on digital competence, educational technology, teacher education, and innovation (Prendes, 2022; Prendes et al., 2018). Ana García-Valcárcel, Professor at the University of Salamanca, has a long-standing research trajectory linked to innovation and digital education (García-Valcárcel Muñoz-Repiso & Basilotta-Gómez-Pablos, 2017; García-Valcárcel Muñoz-Repiso & Caballero González, 2019). Adriana Gewerc, Professor at the University of Santiago de Compostela, has developed a critical line of work on educational technology, teacher education, digital culture, and professional identity (Gewerc-Barujel & Anguita-Martínez, 2025; Gewerc-Barujel & Ramos-Trasar, 2022). Mercè Gisbert, Professor of Educational Technology at Rovira i Virgili University, is an international reference in technologies applied to education, digital competence, and teacher education (Gisbert Cervera et al., 2016; Gisbert Cervera & Caena, 2022). María Luisa Zorrilla, professor and researcher at the Autonomous University of the State of Morelos (Mexico), promoted the creation of the UAEM Directorate of Multimodal Education and, in 2024, received recognition from Open Education Global for her contribution to open education and open educational resources (Zorrilla-Abascal, 2016; Zorrilla-Abascal & Castillo Díaz, 2023). In most cases, these articles have been written in co-authorship with outstanding teachers and researchers in the field of Educational Technology.

Manuel Area-Moreira's article, «*Theoretical Foundations for University Didactics with Generative Artificial Intelligence: The DIDACT.IA Model*», opens the section by reflecting on the need to construct a didactic theory for the educational use of generative artificial intelligence, one of the most urgent issues in contemporary higher education. Its contribution is particularly relevant because it moves the debate beyond instrumental uses, ethical risks, or merely technical literacy, and focuses instead on the pedagogical dimension of educational technology. The DIDACT.IA model organises the educational use of artificial intelligence (AI) into six steps: questioning, comparing, engaging in critical dialogue, verifying, personally reworking, and reflecting. Its central idea is that AI can support learning, provided that students maintain cognitive control of the process through critical thinking. This relevant contribution offers a conceptual

framework in which AI is not understood as a replacement for intellectual work, but as a didactic mediation that requires design, judgement, authorship, verification, and responsibility.

The article by Jesús Salinas, Juan Moreno-García, and Jacoba Munar-Garau, «*Personalised Learning Supported by Digital Technologies: Trends, Challenges and Perspectives*», revisits a classic issue in Educational Technology that has gained renewed relevance with learning analytics, adaptive systems, and generative artificial intelligence. The article distinguishes between two major orientations of personalisation: one centred on technological adaptation through algorithms, analytics, and intelligent tutoring systems; and another linked to curricular flexibility, learner autonomy, flexible pathways, and co-design. Its main contribution lies in showing that personalisation should not be reduced to algorithmic automation or technical efficiency. Personalisation is a pedagogical phenomenon that requires human supervision, attention to equity, data protection, bias analysis, and consideration of the social dimension of learning.

The article by Ana García-Valcárcel Muñoz-Repiso, Marcos Cabezas-González, Sonia Casillas-Martín, and Verónica Basilotta Gómez-Pablos, «*Are Students Digitally Competent? Progress, Misalignments and Future Challenges*», offers a documentary review focused on the Ibero-American context and on students' digital competence over the last 25 years. The study shows that, although significant progress has been made, important misalignments persist, such as the predominance of research in higher education compared with compulsory education, the frequent use of self-perception-based instruments, dependence on European and international frameworks, and shortcomings in areas such as digital safety, content creation, critical evaluation of information, and academic uses of technologies. The article concludes that everyday familiarity with devices and platforms does not amount to critical, academic, and civic digital competence.

Adriana Gewerc, Uxía Regueira, and Angela González-Villa contribute to this Special Section with the article entitled «*Ibero-American Research in Educational Technology as a Vehicle for Official Recontextualisation (2019–2025): A Quantitative Study of Three Spanish Journals*». Based on a corpus of 538 articles published in three Ibero-American journals indexed in the first quartile of Scopus, the study combines bibliometric analysis, semantic networks, methodological classification, and exploratory epistemological analysis. The results show a field organised into nine conceptual communities, with a predominance of quantitative methodologies, instrumental discourse, and an almost residual presence of theoretical production. The contribution is especially significant because it does not merely analyse which technologies are studied, but rather under what rules knowledge in Educational Technology is produced and legitimised. Drawing on Bernstein and Beigel, the authors interpret the field as an applied area with weak conceptual autonomy and strong formal regulation, opening a debate on academic dependence, imported discourses, platformisation, and limited critical density.

María Paz Prendes-Espinosa, Víctor González-Calatayud, and Nerea Gálvez-Vilar present «*Do Our University Students Perceive Themselves as Digital Entrepreneurs?*», a large-scale empirical study on the self-perception of digital entrepreneurship competence among final-year undergraduate students at Spanish public universities. The research is based on the «EmDigital» model and a sample of 4,100 students, using a

quantitative, non-experimental, descriptive, and correlational design. The results indicate moderate-to-high levels of self-perception, with action planning receiving the highest rating and implementation and collaboration receiving the lowest scores, especially in relation to the real intention to undertake entrepreneurial initiatives. The article's specific contribution consists in conceiving digital entrepreneurship as a transversal competence for citizenship and employability, one that is not reduced to a merely business-oriented logic. The study concludes that students may perceive themselves as competent in declarative terms, but they need more authentic, collaborative, and action-oriented learning experiences in order to transform that self-perception into practical capacity.

The article by Roxana Rebolledo-Font de la Vall and Mercè Gisbert-Cervera, «*Creating Applications with AI to Teach English: Perceptions and Challenges in Initial Teacher Education*», addresses the ability to create with AI as an emerging dimension of artificial intelligence literacy. The study analyses the perceptions of 51 university students from three Chilean public universities who designed educational applications using Gemini 3.0. The results are organised around the pedagogical potential of AI for English language learning, the creation of resources and applications, the new role of teachers, the competences required, and the challenges involved in its use. Its contribution to knowledge in Educational Technology is twofold. On the one hand, it provides evidence on real practices of AI-based creation in initial teacher education; on the other, it shows that prompt formulation is not merely a technical skill, but a didactic competence, since translating a pedagogical intention into a precise instruction requires knowledge of content, learners, task design, and assessment criteria.

Finally, María Luisa Zorrilla-Abascal and Maribel Castillo-Díaz close the section with «*Hybrid Methods and E-Methods in Educational Research: An Analysis of Master's and Doctoral Theses*». The article analyses 19 postgraduate theses from the Institute of Educational Sciences of the Autonomous University of the State of Morelos (Mexico) that combine traditional methods and e-methods in face-to-face and digital contexts. The study identifies three types of methodological scenarios (natural, generated, and dual) and examines challenges related to participant access, privacy, consent, digital competences, control of the research setting, identity verification, and multimodal data analysis. This article offers a methodological contribution that is necessary for current educational research, as it shows that if educational practices no longer take place exclusively in face-to-face settings or exclusively in virtual environments, research designs must be able to capture this hybrid continuity without oversimplifying it.

3. Conclusion

RELATEC marks its 25th anniversary as a consolidated journal in the field of Educational Technology. The journal has contributed to the development of Educational Technology in the Ibero-American context. It has also defended an open model of scholarly communication, with no economic barriers for authors or readers, in line with the principles of open science, bibliodiversity, and diamond open access. It has likewise advanced in internationally recognised processes of editorial quality.

RELATEC's 25th anniversary coincides with a profound transformation of both scholarly communication and Educational Technology itself. Generative artificial intelligence is reshaping practices of teaching, learning, assessment, authorship, and

peer review. Open science requires moving beyond general declarations towards verifiable policies on data, materials, licences, preservation, and methodological transparency. Diamond journals require stable institutional support, professional infrastructures, and specific recognition within academic evaluation systems.

In this context, RELATEC faces several strategic challenges. First, it must consolidate its internationalisation without relinquishing its Ibero-American, multilingual, and public identity. It must also strengthen the methodological quality of the works it publishes by promoting rigorous, transparent, and cumulative research. Another challenge is to advance towards more comprehensive open science policies, including FAIR data where possible, reusable materials, availability statements, and transparency practices. It is also important to reinforce the sustainability of the diamond model, making clear that the absence of costs for authors and readers does not imply the absence of editorial costs. Finally, RELATEC must promote responsible assessment, in which bibliometric indicators are interpreted as partial evidence rather than as substitutes for expert judgement.

RELATEC has favourable conditions to address these challenges. It has a consolidated trajectory, a recognisable scientific community, a coherent open access model, a presence in evaluation and indexing systems, and an editorial line specialised in a field of growing social relevance. The future has already begun to be written.

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