



Designing Educational Games with Mastery Learning Strategy to Improve Computational Thinking Skills: A Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract: Students need computational thinking skills to help them face global challenges with rapid technological development. For this reason, teachers must be able to implement CT in learning by paying attention to students' interest in learning, one of which is using educational games. Designing CT-integrated educational games requires appropriate strategies such as mastery learning. This study aims to analyse the development of educational game design using mastery learning strategies so that it can provide an overview to educators in developing the media to improve students' CT skills. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method. The data obtained was analysed bibliometrically using the VOS Viewer application. The VOS Viewer analysis shows that there is a connection between game design, computational thinking, and mastery learning that began in 2016. The results also show that there are 4 things that become the basis for designing educational games, namely cognitive, motivational, affective, and sociocultural perspectives..

Keywords: Educational Games, Mastery Learning Strategy, Computational Thinking

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1. Introduction

The curriculum in Indonesia is always undergoing improvements by following the development of science and technology in order to equip students to be able to answer global challenges. This improvement is manifested by the presence of the Independent Learning-Independent Campuses (i.e. MBKM) curriculum which focuses more on mastering 21st century life skills. One of the life skills in question is computational thinking skills (Candrawati, Uliyandari, Rustaman, & Kaniawati, 2022). Computational thinking was popularized by Wing (2006) who described CT as problem solving, system design, and understanding human behavior by drawing on fundamental concepts for computer science. But then, CT is no longer only for computer science, but in other fields of science (Kraska, 2020). Alyahya and Alotaibi (Alyahya & Alotaibi, 2019) also said that computational thinking is a cross-curricular topic that can be integrated into the curriculum itself.

The implementation of CT according to Malik (2017) must pay attention to the interest of students in learning by using interactive learning media. One of the learning media that is considered to be able to encourage the development of students' computational thinking is educational games. Vahldick (2020) states that the purpose of games in an educational context is to create motivation and an attractive atmosphere in learning because students will be rewarded if they successfully complete the challenges in the game so that they are trained to find solutions to the problems encountered. This means that games as learning media can provide a special attraction that encourages increased student motivation to learn. López et al. (2016) and Chau et al. (2015) also mentioned that games and their development have been used as a strategy to promote learning. Research conducted by Silvana (2021) shows that there is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores after utilizing the learning process with the "Script Labyrinth" game. The educational game itself is interpreted as a medium that integrates subject matter into game components (Riva, 2012).

Designing educational games is not easy (Silva, 2020). The process of designing an educational game needs a lot of planning and requires a lot of skills (Hussein, Ow, Cheong, & Thong, 2019). Here, the game must be adapted to the material and purpose of the lesson. One of the learning strategies that can underlie the design of educational games is mastery learning, namely a learning strategy with the aim that most students can master the learning objectives completely (Francis, Ezenkiri, & Enock, 2022). Mukhtar (2020) defines mastery learning as a learning approach by adhering to the principle of mastery learning with benchmarks used in achieving learning outcomes. Complete learning ensures comprehensive learning outcomes, allowing learners to progress only after mastering each level of content (Winget &

Persky, 2022). With a mastery learning strategy, educational games are designed to challenge students to achieve their learning goals completely. Likewise with educational games whose game components are integrated with computational thinking. Where, students are considered to have achieved learning objectives if they have successfully completed a game that contains elements of CT. This, in turn, fosters CT skills, such as decomposition, abstraction, pattern recognition and algorithmic thinking (Hunsaker, 2020); (Grover & Pea, 2013)). Research also underscores the compatibility of mastery learning with game-based education, as students receive immediate feedback and adjust their approach until they achieve the desired outcome (Lin, et al., 2013). This is in line with Bloom's (1984) findings, which state that mastery learning improves knowledge retention and application.

Previous researchers have paid great attention to the implementation of CT, resulting in several systematic reviews of strategies used to teach CT, one of which is game-based. However, issues related to the design of educational games integrated with computational thinking have not been discussed in depth. This also provides information that effective strategies that can be used in designing CT-integrated educational games have not really been found. For this reason, it is necessary to map scientific knowledge and recognize the development of research related to this matter so that practitioners and academics get logical knowledge that can be applied when designing CT-integrated educational games.

One way to map scientific knowledge is bibliometrics. This method is a literature analysis that is widely used by researchers these days. Bibliometrics is a study of bibliographic analysis of scientific activities, focusing on the analysis of published data (Prahani, et al., 2022); (Tupan, Rahayu, Rachmawati, & Rahayu, 2018). Using bibliometric analysis, this study seeks to map out effective strategies for integrating CT, educational games and flipped learning. This bibliometric study provides a framework for integrating these themes.

2. Method

This research uses bibliometric analysis to map scientific knowledge about educational game design integrated with computational thinking. It provides a quantitative assessment of scholarly output within a particular field or discipline. By analyzing publication data, citations, and other bibliographic indicators, it is possible to gain insights into trends and the impact of research outputs over time (Guzsvinecz & Szelinger, 2024). The bibliometric steps taken include the following five steps (Putri, Syahmani, & Prasetyo, 2023); (Setyaningsih, Indarti, & Jie, 2018); (Hossain, Dayarathna, Nagahi, & Jaradat, 2020); (Ria, 2024)) as presented in figure 1.

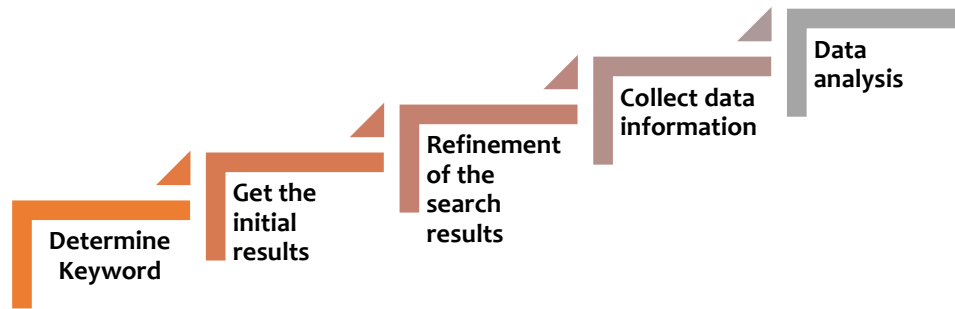


Figure 1. Bibliometric Analysis Workflow

To search the initial data, the researcher used the keywords “educational game”, “computational thinking”, “mastery learning”, and “designing game” with the help of publish or perish software in 10 years (2013-2022). All data were saved in .ris file format. Initial statistics using VOSViewer software with the selected data to reveal the network visualisation of the keywords obtained from the metadata ((Shen, et al., 2023); (Ji, et al., 2023). VOSviewer is effectively used in analysing bibliographic data and produces in-depth data analytical output in the form of mapping visualisations, in example network, overlay, and densities (Hidayat, Patras, Usman, Gunawan, & Windiyani, 2023). These results were then descriptively re-analysed in terms of clusters of keywords, year of publication, affiliation, publication type, and number of citations.

3. Result and Discussion

Analysis of Trends

The data results from VOSViewer show that there are 4,292 terms with 128 meet the threshold. After being analyzed, the data is separated into 3 clusters that have interrelated keywords. The following is a cluster table from the results of data analysis with VOSViewer.

Table 1. Keywords Representing Each Cluster

Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3
Algorithmic thinking	Challenge	Child
Computational thinking	Educational game	Concept
Game development	Game	
Master	Game design	
Paper	Game designer	
Problem	Learning	
Programming	Mastery	
Teacher	Serious game	
Teaching		

The network visualization in VOSViewer shows the relationship between keywords and published articles. Color differences indicate cluster differences (Ji, et al., 2023). Below is a network visualization of data analysis results in VOSViewer (Figure 2).

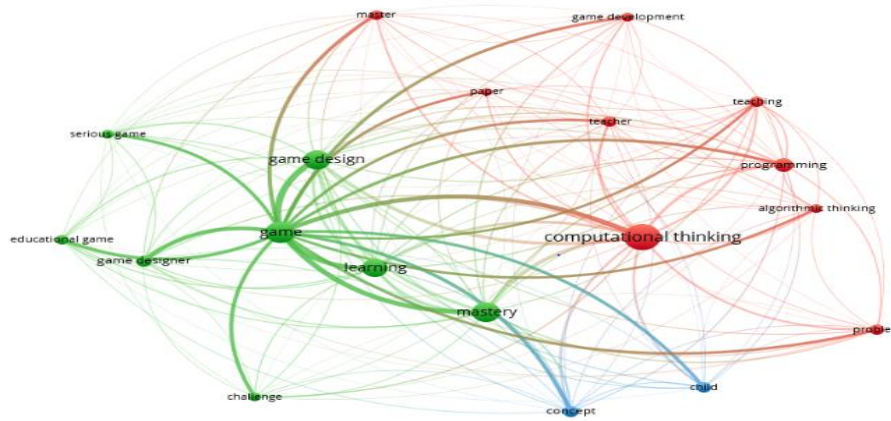


Figure 2. The Network Visualization In Game Educational, Mastery Learning, And Computational Thinking Study

Figure 2 above shows that there is a close relationship between games, game design, and computational thinking. This is in line with the research conducted by Troiano et al. (Troiano, et al., 2019) which assessed the development of students' computational thinking from game design with Scratch. The results of this study show how game design in the STEM curriculum leads to computational thinking skills. Meanwhile, research by Ch'ng et.al (2019) shows that the most common approach used for learning computational thinking is the use of games as programming and reflective systems through the development of serious games. This relationship is also seen in the keywords that are most often found in articles that are included in cluster 1.

Besides being related to computational thinking, educational games and game design are also related to mastery learning strategies. These three keywords are included in cluster 2. The study of the implementation of game-based learning with mastery learning strategies conducted by Lin et al. (2013) showed that mastery learning is very well used for reflection and remedial, where every time students cannot answer questions with correct then they will receive instructions for immediate repair. In the concept of game-based learning, the mastery learning strategy makes students unable to continue the game before they can complete the questions or challenges of the game at the previous level.

Analysis based on overlay visualization (Figure 3) shows that the study of games started in early 2015 with a focus on games, some educational games, and serious games. Then in mid-2016, research on games began to lead to mastery learning strategies. Research on games continues to grow until approaching 2018 starting to be associated with computational thinking.

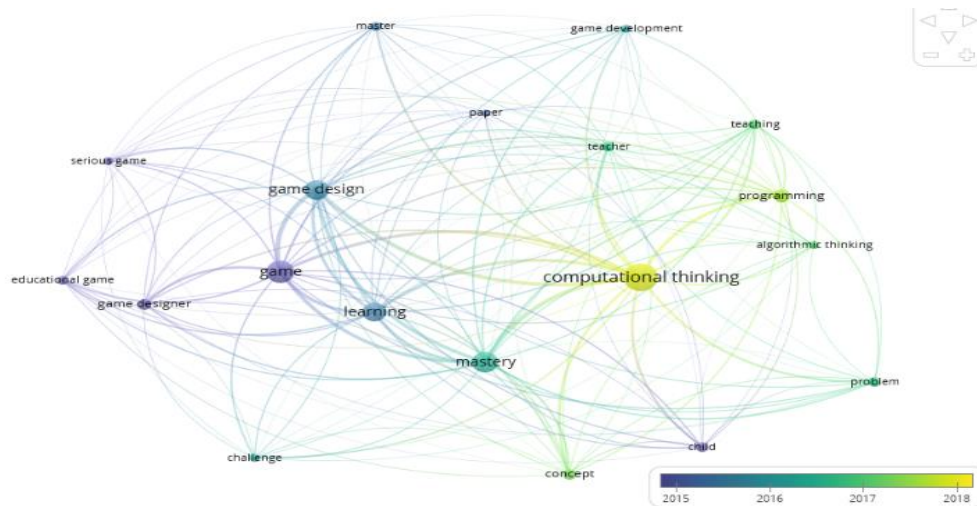


Figure 3. Overlay Visualization in Game Educational, Mastery Learning, and Computational Thinking Study

The analysis based on the overlay visualisation also shows that the current research trend still around the relationship between game design and computational thinking, for various levels of education. The yellow colour on the computational thinking keyword indicates that the research on the topic is still relatively new, so it is possible to obtain novelty. Although the strategy of thorough learning was found to be related to game design, it was not associated with computational thinking. This shows that there is still a great opportunity for researchers, educators, and librarians to conduct further research linking game design, mastery learning strategies, and computational thinking. Research related to them will be better if it is directed at the scope or field of science.

The top ten authors for papers containing the keywords “educational game”, “computational thinking”, “mastery learning”, and “designing game” are dominated by authors of articles and books. Almost all authors who are included in the top ten authors write about designing games. The following is a table of the top ten authors (table 2).

Table 2. Top Ten Authors

Authors	Year	Total citation	Publication type
J Hamari	2016	5.175	Article
L Berk	2015	4.926	Book
A Collins	2018	2.272	Book
K Seaborn, DI Fels	2015	2.216	Article
A Dominguez	2013	2.123	Article
E Adams	2014	2.016	Book
D Laurillard	2013	1.869	Article
P Wouters	2013	1.667	Article
AJ Romiszowski	2016	1.584	Book
S Nicholson	2015	1.576	Article

Hamari et.al (2016) as the author whose article was most cited suggested that designing educational games by paying attention to game challenges that can follow the development of learners to support continuous learning in game-based learning environments. While Plass, Homer, and Kinzer (Plass, Homer, & Kinzer, 2015) mentioned there are 4 things that become the basis in designing learning games, namely cognitive, motivational, affective, and sociocultural perspectives. According to Plass et.al (2015) a combination of cognitive, motivational, affective, and sociocultural perspectives are needed for game design and game research to capture what games are appropriate for learning. Here, game-based learning is viewed as a series of learner engagements at multiple levels (cognitive, affective, behavioural, and sociocultural), and treats game design elements as strategies to achieve these engagements based on established cognitive, affective, motivational, and sociocultural foundations. Recent studies by Brinson et al. (2020), Kiili et al. (2022), and Hamari et al. (2016) further validate that incorporating these dimensions improves engagement and learning outcomes in game-based environments. In addition, Wouters et al. (2013) found that serious games are highly effective in improving retention and application of complex knowledge when paired with mastery learning strategies.

Other studies, including those by Ernest Adams (2014), have shown how educational games provide narrative structure and immersive experiences that deepen conceptual understanding. In addition, Saavedra and Opfer (2012) emphasized the need to integrate 21st century skills, such as CT, into the curriculum through innovative methods such as game-based learning. Recent bibliometric reviews by Connolly et al. (2012) and Arnab et al. (2012) further highlight the positive effects of educational games on learning outcomes across various disciplines. Studies by Sabourin et al. (2013) and Shute et al. (2017) emphasize adaptive learning mechanisms in educational games to optimize skill acquisition. Meanwhile, Kirriemuir and McFarlane (Kirriemuir & McFarlane, 2004) provide basic insights into the

potential of serious games in education, a point further elaborated by Young et al. (2012) on their cross-disciplinary impact.

Key for Design Educational Games with Mastery Learning

It was previously mentioned that designing educational games must pay attention to four basic things, namely the perspectives of cognitive, affective, motivation, and socioculture. These four must be well integrated into each component of the educational game. The main component of an educational game is to provide engagement and challenge to the user in an effort to solve the problems in the game. Researchers consider game-playing as a problem-solving process (Jiang, Hartevelde, Huang, & Fung, 2019); (Ke, 2016)).

Based on a cognitive perspective, educational games should include elements that encourage problem-solving, algorithmic thinking, and pattern recognition. Cheng, et al. (2023) showed that a game-based approach can improve students' computational thinking skills by providing structured challenges in the form of relevant tasks. In addition, Mayer (2024) explained that multimedia design elements, such as animation and interactive feedback, can improve students' cognitive processing in educational games.

This approach is relevant to mastery learning strategies that require students to master concepts before moving on to the next level (Heintz, Mannila, & Färnqvist, 2016). In this design, the challenges students face should support deep understanding and gradual application of knowledge.

While affective involves students' emotions and engagement with the content. Emotionally relevant narratives and characters are one of the functions of game elements (Alexiou & Schippers, 2018). In addition, the growth mindset facilitated by games can increase students' intrinsic motivation to continue learning (Ng, 2018); (O'Rourke, Haimovitz, Ballweber, Dweck, & Popović, 2014)). González, et al. (2018) notes that the emotional elements integrated in games, such as positive feedback and rewards for success, provide a sense of achievement that motivates students to stay engaged.

Motivation in games can be influenced by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic elements (Stéphanie, et al., 2022). According to Lee and Hammer (Lee & Hammer, 2011), Educational games that uses elements such as points, badges and levels can motivate students to achieve learning goals (Diniz, Silva, Gerosa, & Steinmacher, 2017). This strategy is in line with the principle of mastery learning which motivates students to master each step in the learning process (Winget & Persky, 2022). Education-based games should provide relevant challenges and meaningful rewards. Peery and Pasalar (2018) note that serious game design should create learning experiences focused on mastering the material.

Beyond cognitive, affective, and motivational perspectives, game design should also reflect learners' culture and social context. Jenkins (2007) emphasizes the importance of cultural representation in interactive media, which allows students to feel relevant to the material being taught. This is reinforced by Martin and Bolliger

(2018), who show that social engagement in game-based learning can increase learning effectiveness. Collaborative approaches that utilize social dynamics in games, as described by Barab, Gresalfi, and Ingram-Goble (2011), allow students to work together to solve problems, reflecting sociocultural values.

In addition to the four perspectives above, immediate feedback is also an important element in the design of educational games that support mastery learning strategies (Li, Chen, & Deng, 2024). Bimba et al. (2021) showed that adaptive feedback can accelerate student learning by providing clear guidance on what needs to be improved. Shute et al. (2017) also emphasized the importance of iterative problem solving, where students can try different approaches until they find the right solution. This process not only improves students' understanding but also their confidence in facing new challenges (Bandura, 1997).

Educational games should also be designed to be accessible to learners with diverse backgrounds and abilities. Silva (2020) emphasized that games should include adjustable difficulty levels to accommodate the needs of different students. In addition, Cheung and Slavin (Cheung & Slavin, 2013) noted that well-integrated educational technology can improve academic achievement in various contexts.

Opportunities for Future Research

Although flipped learning strategies and CT integration in games show promising results, there are still gaps in customizing these designs to specific educational contexts. Further research should explore interdisciplinary approaches and specific applications in the field. Future research should consider diversity in learner profiles and the cultural relevance of game content to optimize effectiveness (Jossan, Gauthier, & Jenkinson, 2021). Studies such as Dominguez et al. (2013) emphasize that gamification approaches benefit greatly from contextual adaptability to different levels of education and fields of study.

Recent studies also highlight the potential of incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance personalized learning experiences in game-based learning environments. For instance, Akavova et al. (2023) discussed how adaptive AI systems can tailor challenges and feedback to individual learners' needs, significantly improving engagement and learning outcomes. Additionally, Udeozor et al. (2023) explored the integration of VR and AR technologies in educational games, revealing their capability to provide immersive and interactive experiences that support complex cognitive skill development.

Another promising direction is the use of data analytics to monitor and optimize students' learning paths within educational games. Research by [Minović](#) and [Milovanović](#) (2013) demonstrated how real-time analytics could help educators adjust game parameters to better align with educational objectives. This approach not only enhances the efficacy of game-based learning but also provides valuable insights into students' learning behaviors.

Future research should also address the sustainability and accessibility of game-based learning designs. In addition, research is also needed that emphasizes the importance of developing low-cost, scalable educational games that can be

implemented in resource-constrained educational settings. By addressing this gap, researchers can further refine the integration of computational thinking, flipped learning strategies and game design to create more effective and inclusive educational tools.

4. Conclusion

This research reveals that educational game design integrated with mastery learning strategies has great potential in improving students' computational thinking skills. Bibliometric analysis showed significant developments since 2015, with a focus on the relationship between educational games, mastery learning strategies and computational thinking that began to be established in 2018. Effective educational game design should consider four key dimensions-cognitive, motivational, affective and sociocultural-to create a well-rounded learning experience. Nonetheless, there is still a research gap in the integration of these aspects, especially in various educational and cultural contexts, which opens up great opportunities for future research. This research provides a useful conceptual framework for practitioners and academics in developing innovative learning media to prepare students for global challenges.

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