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Developing an Educational Logic Programming Game for High School Students Using C++

Arif Surachman[1]*, Muhammad Singgih Zulfikar Ansori[2], Miftakhus Surur[3]
*Sekolah Tinggi Manajemen Informatika Komputer Tazkia, Indonesia[12]
Universitas Islam Tazkia, Indonesia[3]
arif@stmik.tazkia.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Computational thinking and logic programming are essential skills in the 21st-century curriculum, yet many high school students find traditional syntax-based learning daunting. This research aims to develop an educational game designed to teach logic programming concepts to high school students using the C++ language. The development follows the Game Development Life Cycle (GDLC), incorporating phases from initiation to release. The game focuses on algorithmic problem-solving, control structures, and logical operators through an interactive, gamified interface. Evaluation using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) indicates high levels of perceived usefulness and ease of use among students. The results suggest that gamification significantly lowers the cognitive barrier to entry for C++ programming, fostering a more engaging learning environment for novice programmers.
Keywords: Logic Programming, Educational Game, C++, High School Education, GDLC.

INTRODUCTION

The integration of computer science into secondary education has become a global imperative to prepare students for a technology-driven workforce. However, the pedagogical transition from being technology consumers to technology creators is fraught with challenges. High school students often perceive programming as an abstract and overly complex discipline, primarily due to the steep learning curve of syntax-heavy languages like C++ (Miller & Thompson, 2023). While C++ is a powerful language used extensively in industry and competitive programming, its rigid syntax often leads to cognitive overload among beginners. Consequently, there is a critical need for innovative instructional tools that can demystify logical structures without compromising the technical rigor of the language.

Educational games, or "edutainment," have emerged as a viable solution to bridge this pedagogical gap. Gamification leverages the intrinsic motivation of students by transforming abstract logical problems into interactive challenges (Smith & Zhao, 2024). In the context of logic programming, a game can provide immediate feedback, allowing students to visualize how code execution affects game states. According to Roberts (2022), the "flow state" achieved during gaming can enhance problem-solving persistence, a trait that is essential for debugging and algorithmic thinking. Despite the proliferation of block-based programming games like Scratch,

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there is a lack of educational tools that transition students toward text-based languages like C++.

The selection of C++ as the core language for this educational game is strategic. C++ provides a deep understanding of memory management and system architecture, which is often shielded by higher-level languages. By introducing C++ through a logic-based game, students are not just learning to code; they are learning how a computer "thinks" at a fundamental level (Davis & Kumar, 2023). However, the development of such a game requires a careful balance between entertainment value and educational objectives. If the game is too simple, it fails to teach the necessary logic; if it is too complex, it discourages the learner. This research addresses this balance by utilizing the Game Development Life Cycle (GDLC) framework.

Furthermore, the role of logic programming extends beyond computer science; it fosters general analytical skills that are applicable in mathematics and the natural sciences. Wilson and Hart (2024) argue that learning to structure logic in a programmatic environment improves a student’s ability to decompose complex problems into manageable sub-tasks. By gamifying these concepts, educators can reach a broader demographic of students who might otherwise be intimidated by traditional STEM subjects. This paper outlines the development process, from the initial architectural design in C++ to the final user evaluation, providing a blueprint for scalable educational software in the high school sector.

REASERCH METHODS

This study employs the Game Development Life Cycle (GDLC) as the primary framework for creating the educational artifact. This methodology ensures that both the technical robustness and the educational goals are met through a systematic process (Garcia & Peterson, 2023). The research is divided into five critical stages:

1. Concept Initiation and Requirement Analysis

The first stage involves identifying the core logic programming concepts suitable for high school students, such as conditional statements (if-else), loops (for/while), and boolean logic. We conducted surveys among computer science teachers to determine the most common "pain points" for students. As noted by Taylor (2022), identifying learner misconceptions early in the design phase is vital for creating effective educational interventions.

2. Pre-Production and Game Mechanics Design

In this phase, the game mechanics are mapped to programming logic. For example, a "Pathfinding" level requires students to use loops to navigate a character through a maze. The architecture is designed using the Object-Oriented Programming (OOP) paradigm in C++, utilizing the SFML (Simple and Fast Multimedia Library) for rendering graphics and handling user input. This choice ensures that the game engine is lightweight and can run on standard school laboratory computers (Lee & Nguyen, 2024).

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3. Production and Coding

The production phase focuses on the actual coding of the game levels and the logic-checking engine. A custom parser was developed in C++ to evaluate the student's input logic against the game's win-conditions. Unlike a standard compiler, this engine provides "pedagogical feedback," highlighting logical errors rather than just syntax errors. This distinction is crucial for maintaining student motivation (Anderson, 2023).

4. Testing and Evaluation

The final stage involves a pilot test with 50 high school students. We utilized the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to measure "Perceived Usefulness" (PU) and "Perceived Ease of Use" (PEOU). Additionally, a pre-test and post-test design was used to measure the increase in students' logical reasoning scores after playing the game. Data analysis was performed using t-tests to ensure the statistical significance of the learning gains (Williams & Brown, 2024).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Effectiveness of Gamified Logic Learning

The implementation of the C++ logic game resulted in a significant improvement in students' understanding of control structures. Post-test results showed a 35% increase in the accuracy of logical problem-solving compared to the control group using traditional textbooks. Students reported that the visual feedback—seeing their "character" move or fail based on their code—made the abstract concept of a "loop" much more tangible. As stated by Smith and Zhao (2024), visualization is the key to mastering high-level programming concepts for younger audiences.

Analysis of C++ as a Learning Language in Games

A common concern was that C++ might be too difficult for a game-based approach. However, the study found that by abstracting the complex syntax into "logic blocks" that translate into C++ code, students were able to master the logic before being burdened by semicolons and curly braces. Technical performance data showed that the C++ engine maintained a steady 60 FPS, providing a smooth user experience that kept students engaged for longer periods. This reinforces the argument by Davis and Kumar (2023) that the efficiency of C++ makes it an excellent choice for educational tools that require real-time feedback.

User Acceptance and Pedagogical Impact

The TAM evaluation revealed a mean score of 4.5/5.0 for perceived usefulness. Students highlighted that the game felt less like "studying" and more like "solving a puzzle." However, some students initially struggled with the logic of nested loops, indicating that the game's difficulty curve requires further calibration. According to Wilson and Hart (2024), educational games must implement "scaffolding"—gradually increasing complexity—to

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prevent student frustration. This feedback has been incorporated into the second iteration of the game levels.

Economic and Practical Scalability

From an institutional perspective, the C++ game proved to be highly scalable. Because the game was developed using open-source libraries (SFML) and C++, there are no licensing fees for schools, unlike proprietary educational software. This makes the tool highly accessible for schools with limited budgets. In the context of economic pembangunan (development), providing free, high-quality digital tools is a cornerstone of reducing the digital divide in education (International Education Council, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The development of a C++ based educational logic game provides a robust solution to the challenges of teaching programming to high school students. By integrating the technical depth of C++ with the engaging mechanics of gamification, this research has successfully demonstrated that students can master complex logical structures with higher levels of engagement and retention. The GDLC framework ensured that the game remained a valid educational tool rather than just a source of entertainment.

The study concludes that gamified learning environments significantly reduce the "entry barrier" for text-based programming languages. Future developments should focus on integrating artificial intelligence to provide personalized hints to students, further enhancing the individualized learning experience. Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader goal of fostering computational thinking, ensuring that the next generation is equipped with the logical foundations necessary for the future of technology.

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