



IJRASET

International Journal For Research in
Applied Science and Engineering Technology



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH

IN APPLIED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

Volume: 14 **Issue:** IV **Month of publication:** April 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22214/ijraset.2026.79303>

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An Interactive 3D Campus Simulation System for Educational Institutions

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Abstract: Traditional campus representations, such as 2D maps, brochures, and static websites, often fail to provide a realistic and immersive understanding of college infrastructure. These methods limit spatial awareness, making it difficult for students, visitors, and stakeholders to effectively visualize campus layouts and building structures.

To overcome this limitation, this study proposes a 3D virtual campus visualization system that enables users to explore a complete 3D model of a college campus in an interactive digital environment. The system allows users to view and navigate virtual buildings, explore departments, and access detailed information such as classroom locations, facilities, and infrastructure through an intuitive interface.

The system is developed using Unity 3D and 3D modeling tools, enabling seamless rendering and interaction with the virtual campus model. The primary objective is to enhance spatial understanding, improve user engagement, and provide a modern visualization tool for academic institutions.

This work demonstrates how 3D modeling and interactive visualization technologies can be effectively combined to create informative, realistic, and user-friendly campus representations.

Keywords: Augmented Reality, Virtual Campus, Unity 3D, 3D Visualization, Human-Computer Interaction, Real-Time Rendering

I. INTRODUCTION

Large educational campuses often face challenges in effectively conveying spatial information to students and visitors. Traditional navigation methods such as printed maps and signboards provide limited guidance and lack interactivity, making it difficult to understand campus layouts.

With advancements in computer graphics and simulation technologies, three-dimensional (3D) visualization has emerged as a powerful solution for representing real-world environments. Interactive systems allow users to explore digital environments, offering a more intuitive understanding of spatial structures.

The project titled “3-D Perspective of Institute” aims to develop an interactive 3D virtual campus model. The system enables users to explore buildings and infrastructure in a dynamic and engaging manner. It is implemented using Unity 3D for real-time rendering and C# for handling navigation and interaction.

The proposed system provides the following features:

- Navigation through the virtual campus
- Viewing buildings from multiple perspectives
- Interactive object-based information access

This approach offers a more immersive and informative alternative to traditional campus representation methods.

II. RELATED WORK

Recent advancements in 3D visualization and virtual environment technologies have significantly influenced interactive system development. Compared to traditional 2D representations, 3D visualization enables better understanding of spatial relationships and structural layouts, making it highly useful in education, simulation, architecture, and urban planning.

Research in computer graphics highlights that techniques such as real-time shading, texture mapping, and lighting models contribute to the creation of realistic virtual environments. Studies emphasize that real-time rendering plays a crucial role in balancing visual quality and system performance.

Game engines such as Unity have gained popularity for developing interactive 3D applications due to their powerful rendering capabilities and ease of development.

Unity provides features like real-time rendering, physics simulation, animation systems, and scripting support using C#, making it suitable for building virtual environments.

Interactive 3D systems enhance user engagement by allowing users to navigate and explore digital spaces more effectively. These systems improve understanding of large environments and are especially useful in educational and institutional applications.

Several virtual campus systems have been developed to provide digital tours of institutions. These systems improve accessibility by allowing remote exploration and are commonly used for orientation and promotion. However, many existing systems are limited to static visualization or guided navigation, lacking real-time interaction and scalability.

A. Research Gap Identification

Despite advancements in 3D visualization and virtual simulation, several limitations still exist:

- Limited interaction in existing virtual campus systems
 - Lack of real-time navigation and flexibility
 - Poor scalability for large campus environments
 - Insufficient focus on user experience and usability
- Therefore, there is a need for a system that:
- Enables fully interactive 3D exploration
 - Supports real-time navigation
 - Is scalable for large environments
 - Provides intuitive and user-friendly interaction

The proposed system addresses these challenges by combining interactive 3D visualization and real-time navigation, making it more practical, engaging, and effective for institutional use.

III. PROPOSED SYSTEM METHODOLOGY

A. System Architecture

The proposed system uses a layered architecture to ensure modularity, scalability, and efficient interaction between components. This design integrates user interaction, application logic, and 3D rendering into a unified framework.

1) User Layer

This layer includes users such as students, visitors, and faculty. They interact with the system using input devices like a keyboard and mouse to navigate the virtual campus.

2) User Interface Layer

The UI layer connects users with the system by providing navigation controls, menus, interactive buttons, and information panels. It is designed to be intuitive and user-friendly.

3) Application Logic Layer

This layer contains core functionalities implemented using C# scripts in Unity. It manages movement, camera control, user interactions, and data processing.

4) 3D Environment Layer

This layer represents the virtual campus, including 3D models of buildings, roads, and environmental elements. Unity's rendering engine provides real-time visualization, lighting, and effects.

5) Data Layer

The data layer stores information about buildings, departments, and facilities, which is dynamically accessed during user interaction.

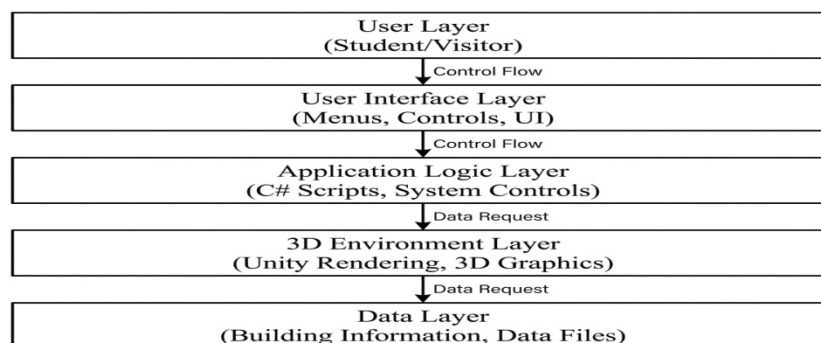


Fig.3.1: System Architecture

B. 3D Model Development

The 3D model development phase focuses on creating realistic digital representations of campus infrastructure using tools such as Blender and SketchUp.

1) Modelling Process

This involves designing building structures, creating roads and pathways, and adding environmental elements.

2) Texturing and Materials

Textures and materials improve realism by defining surface appearance, reflection, and material properties.

3) Optimization Techniques

Performance is enhanced using polygon reduction, Level of Detail (LOD), and efficient mesh structuring.

4) Exporting Models

Models are exported in formats like FBX and OBJ for smooth integration with Unity.

C. Scene Integration

Scene integration combines all 3D models into a complete virtual environment within Unity.

1) Model Importing

All 3D assets are imported and organized in the Unity hierarchy.

2) Scene Setup

Models are repositioned accurately, terrain is configured, and skyboxes are applied.

3) Lighting and Rendering

Realism is achieved using lighting, shadows, reflections, and real-time rendering.

4) Environment Configuration

Includes environmental effects, camera setup, and performance optimization.

D. Navigation and Interaction

This module enables users to explore and interact with the virtual campus.

1) Navigation System

First-person controls allow movement, rotation, zooming, and viewing adjustments.

2) Interaction Mechanism

Interaction is implemented using raycasting and collision detection. When a user selects an object, the system retrieves and displays relevant information.

3) Human-Computer Interaction (HCI)

The system follows HCI principles by ensuring intuitive controls, responsive interaction, and effective feedback.

E. Algorithm

The system follows an event-driven approach to process user inputs and render the environment.

Algorithm: Virtual Campus Navigation System

1) Step 1: Start the application

2) Step 2: Initialize Unity engine and load resources

3) Step 3: Import and organize 3D models

4) Step 4: Apply textures, lighting, and environment setup

5) Step 5: Display the virtual campus scene

6) Step 6: While application is running

- Check user input

- If navigation input:

- Update camera position

- Render updated scene

- If interaction input:

- Detect selected object

- Retrieve object data

- Display information panel
- 7) Step 7: Repeat until user exits
- 8) Step 8: Close the application

IV. WORK FLOW

The workflow of the proposed system describes how the virtual 3D campus is loaded, rendered, and interacted with by users. The system is designed to provide a smooth and immersive campus exploration experience. The workflow is divided into the following steps:

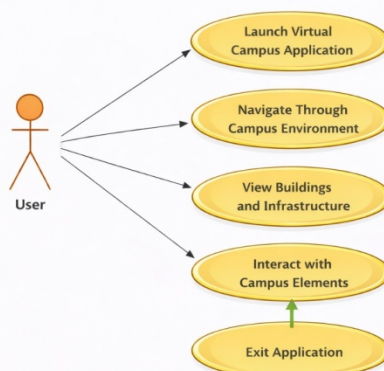


Fig.4.2: Workflow of Virtual Campus System

Step 1: System Initialization

The application starts by initializing the Unity environment and loading essential assets such as 3D models, textures, scripts, and camera configurations.

Step 2: 3D Model Loading

The system imports 3D models of campus buildings, roads, and infrastructure, arranging them according to the real-world layout.

Step 3: Scene Setup and Rendering

Textures, materials, and lighting are applied to enhance realism. The scene is then rendered in real time using Unity's rendering engine.

Step 4: User Input Processing

User input is continuously captured through keyboard and mouse for movement, camera rotation, zooming, and interaction.

Step 5: Camera and Navigation Control

Users can freely navigate the virtual campus. The camera updates dynamically to provide a smooth and immersive experience.

Step 6: Object Interaction

When a user selects a building or object, the system identifies it, retrieves relevant information, and displays it through the interface.

Step 7: Continuous System Update

The system runs in a loop to ensure real-time performance:

- Capturing user input
- Updating movement and interactions
- Rendering the updated scene

Step 8: Integration of Future Upgradations

Even though the current system functions as a 3D virtual environment, it is designed to support future enhancements that would allow mobile devices to visualize and interact with the real world.

A. Qualitative Results

A qualitative evaluation was carried out to assess the effectiveness and usability of the developed 3D campus model. The analysis focused on user interaction, visual realism, navigation experience, and the practical usefulness of the system in an educational environment.

The developed system presents an interactive 3D model of the college campus that enables users to explore infrastructure virtually. The model includes major campus elements such as academic buildings, pathways, open areas, and key facilities, providing a realistic representation of the physical environment.

The system was implemented using tools such as Blender for 3D modeling and Unity 3D for rendering and interaction, ensuring a visually immersive and user-friendly experience.

Users can navigate through the campus using keyboard and mouse controls, similar to first-person virtual environments. The qualitative observations include:

- Smooth navigation across different campus areas
- Real-time interaction with the virtual environment
- Ability to explore inaccessible or restricted areas virtually
- Enhanced engagement compared to traditional 2D maps

The visual quality of the 3D model plays a crucial role in user satisfaction. The system provides an accurate representation of the campus layout and structure, supported by textures and lighting that improve realism and spatial understanding.

The project also demonstrates practical usefulness in educational and institutional contexts. It can assist new students in understanding campus layouts, support virtual campus tours during admissions, and provide a modern method for infrastructure visualization.

Despite these advantages, some limitations were observed, including high system requirements for smooth performance, limited detail in certain areas due to time constraints, and the absence of dynamic environmental elements.

Overall, the qualitative results indicate that the 3D campus model effectively enhances user understanding, engagement, and interaction. Compared to traditional methods such as maps or static images, the system offers a more immersive and intuitive way to explore the campus.

V. ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION

This study employed a mixed-method research design to investigate the effectiveness of using 3D models in primary science education.

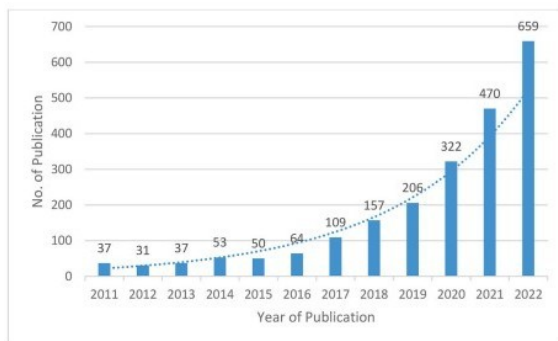


Fig. 4.3: Gradual Growth in Immersive Educational Applications

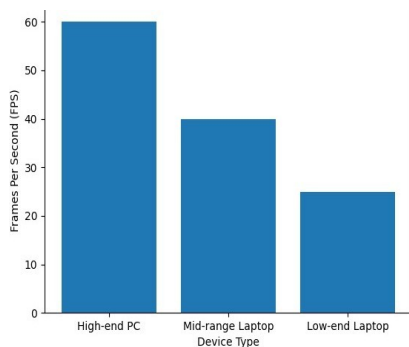


Fig.4.4: Performance(FPS) across devices

The analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative data to identify subjects that are difficult in primary school science learning and to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of 3D models on students' learning. The quantitative data obtained from the teacher opinion form were transformed into a frequency table. Additional quantitative data were obtained from the pre-test and post-test scores collected through the Concept Achievement Test administered to 3rd and 4th grade students. The SPSS software was used to analyze the quantitative data. Since the obtained data followed a normal distribution, a comparative t-test was applied for statistical analysis.

The qualitative data were analyzed descriptively. In the qualitative analysis, a detailed content analysis method was used to examine the interview transcripts and observation notes. Initially, two researchers independently examined a subset of the data to develop a preliminary codebook, ensuring that the coding process was grounded in the actual data.

Regular meetings were conducted to discuss and refine the developed codes in order to achieve inter-coder reliability. The collected data were then compared by the researchers, and the coding and categorization performed by each researcher were carefully examined. Once consensus was reached, the final codebook was applied to the entire dataset.

Using the formula developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), the percentage of agreement between the researchers was calculated as 0.93, indicating a high level of coding reliability. During the qualitative data analysis, 3rd grade students were coded as S3 and 4th grade students were coded as S4.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper presented the development of an interactive 3D virtual model of the PRMITR campus using Unity3D, C# scripting, and 3D modeling tools such as Blender and SketchUp.

The proposed system provides a realistic, user-friendly, and engaging platform for students, visitors, and stakeholders to explore the campus virtually. By visualizing buildings, roads, and infrastructure interactively, the system enhances navigation and spatial understanding compared to traditional campus maps.

Furthermore, this project demonstrates the practical application of computer graphics, simulation technologies, and interactive system design in educational environments. It also highlights the potential of 3D visualization as an effective tool for virtual campus exploration, orientation, and institutional presentation.

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