

Re: PROGRAMMING HOMEWORK HELP!

Source: <http://coding.derkeiler.com/Archive/General/comp.programming/2004-03/2551.html>

From: Michael Mendelsohn (*keine.Werbung.1300_at_michael.mendelsohn.de*)

Date: 03/31/04

Date: Wed, 31 Mar 2004 11:47:42 +0200

James Rogers schrieb:

> *Michael Mendelsohn <keine.Werbung.1300@michael.mendelsohn.de> wrote in*

> *news:4069FDC5.9ADB0903@michael.mendelsohn.de:*

> > *That is not my problem.*

> > *My problem is that students are left in the dark what these deadlines*

> > *mean, and how to cope with them. I agree that they should know this*

> > *when they leave school, but that doesn't mean they may not be told*

> > *about it while in school, does it?*

>

> *I am truly surprised that a student does not understand what a*

> *deadline means by the time he or she arrives at the university.*

> *There should have been very many assignments with deadlines from*

> *early in the student's school career.*

There is no workload as heavy as in college in any previous school, at least for most of the students bright enough to attend it, in my experience.

> *Students have been exposed to deadlines for completion of work*

> *related to written composition, mathematics, history, science,*

> *and many other subjects since they were first able to read and*

> *write.*

>

> *What is different about a deadline for a programming exercise?*

The difference is that the programming deadline creates a disproportionately high workload. Students who can cope with the other courses ok get in trouble with this while seeing that some of their fellows do take this course like the other courses; they do not understand why this should be so and take a heavy blow to their self-esteem.

Experience counts a lot, and the introductory programming courses I've seen (in 3 different institutions) start out aimed at the inexperienced beginner and midway start to orient themselves towards the more experienced as if that course was so great as to turn inexperienced people into experienced programmers in such a short time. (These courses, pitifully, usually aren't).

comp.programming: Re: PROGRAMMING HOMEWORK HELP!

- > > *I also do not understand why it should be that only those with no*
- > > *programming background have the need to experience this kind of*
- > > *stress.*
- >
- > *Do you have any proof that this is truly the situation?*
- > *Are the students with no programming background the only ones to*
- > *have deadlines and externally imposed requirements for programming*
- > *exercises?*

For them, the deadline means something totally different, because the learning they have to do to make it is so much more than for the others. For students with programming background, the demands are not as high, and thus the stress level is lower by magnitudes.

- > > *Erm. Or it may not be part of the proscribed curriculum, and the*
- > > *workload is such that even the interested student is discouraged from*
- > > *taking these courses.*
- >
- > *Any student who thinks learning is a mechanical exercise satisfied*
- > *by spending a proscribed amount of time with a specified curriculum*
- > *is bound to struggle with understanding.*

Any students whose lecturers proclaim that those who did not understand his course should have expended more energy on the exercises provided furthers this kind of misunderstanding. There are many who do (unless you ask them in private).

- > *what is learned in that*
- > *area must be fit into an understanding or world view that is shaped*
- > *by the knowledge gained in other subjects, some of which were learned*
- > *before entering the university.*
- >
- > *There is nothing special about introductory programming courses in*
- > *this respect.*

If you haven't done programming before, it depends on your understanding of mathematics (and possibly physics) how alien the task of programming appears to you. What your understanding of mathematics is depends a lot on the teachers you've had, and (again, in my experience) this quality varies: some teach "true" understanding, others limit themselves to teaching formulas (which can't be done without some understanding to make do, but it's quite a different beast).

So the work you have to do to fit programming into your world view (which you *must*, as you say – if you don't, you're totally without orientation, a state that has been aptly described by Thomas Stegen) depends on how ready this world view is to connect to these concepts.

One can argue that the high schools should provide for this foundation; the situation of this probably varies from country to country.

comp.programming: Re: PROGRAMMING HOMEWORK HELP!

- > >> *The University cannot make students thoughtful, creative, or*
- > >> *persistent. The University can only provide the environment and*
- > >> *situations to allow students to develop those qualities themselves.*
- > >
- > > *Stress is, in my experience, _not_ an environment that makes people*
- > > *thoughtful or creative.*
- >
- > *I disagree. Panic inhibits thought and creativity. Stress provides the*
- > *motivation and energy to accomplish things one would never consider*
- > *accomplishing in the absence of stress.*

Exactly. Do you want me to derail this thread into a discussion about how people get to commit Nazi atrocities? These too are things most people would never consider accomplishing in the absence of stress.

- > *Athletes only improve their performance through hard exercise which*
- > *results in sore muscles and fatigue. Similarly, academic improvement*
- > *only happens when a student works to extend his or her capabilities*
- > *beyond current comfort levels.*

This is a very cynical outlook.
Were it true, self-taught people would not exist.

- > *In a job you will be given a limited amount of time and money to*
- > *accomplish your tasks. This is true even if you have never accomplished*
- > *that task before.*

I am not disputing this.
(And please remember that to starve employees of resources is an excellent way to mob them).

- > *One must learn to respond to stress without resorting to panic. It is*
- > *a basic survival characteristic. Those who cannot deal with the*
- > *stresses of programming should seriously consider altering their*
- > *curriculum and academic plans to exclude programming.*

If to learn this is a necessity, again I ask you why it isn't taught?
And why is it taught differently to different people?

- > *Thinking of stress, have you ever investigated the curriculum and*
- > *stress existing in good cooking schools? Most introductory*
- > *programming courses are very mild by comparison.*

I suppose in the cooking school, the requirements are high across the board, while in programming courses, this level of stress is not duplicated in the other courses that run along it, excepting maybe mathematics.

Michael

--

Re: PROGRAMMING HOMEWORK HELP!

comp.programming: Re: PROGRAMMING HOMEWORK HELP!

Feel the stare of my burning hamster and stop smoking!