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Computer club attracting more boys than girls

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Software programming is more popular among boys than girls based on membership applications for the Microsoft-New Straits Times Young Programmers Club.

As at 5pm today, a total of 1,156 MyPC applications were received and applications from boys outnumbered those sent in by girls.

A survey of the first 300 applications received since the club was launched on March 18 by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Microsoft chairman and CEO Bill Gates revealed that 84.4 per cent of the entries were submitted by boys.

This finding supports the supposed gender bias in educational software.

It has often been said that the personal computer "is more alluring to boys than it is to girls", a situation created by the fact that the majority of software designers are men.

In an article entitled Women and Computing for Communications written in 1990 for the ACM, a journal of the Association for Computing Machinery, Karen Frenkel wrote researchers have shown that previous experiences, feelings of self-efficacy and mathematical ability were major predictors of success in computer science courses.

Therefore, programming tools like C or C++ creates the feeling that one is in control of the machines and can make a difference in the operation of the machine, she wrote.

This factor, which apparently differs between male and female, may cause women to achieve a lower level of achievement in computing.

It is hoped that efforts like MyPC will debunk the myth that programming is "exclusively" for boys.

The club's activities will be gender-neutral with emphasis on the fact that programming is not only easy but also fun.

MyPC is a programme to discover and nurture young programming talents.

MyPC will complement the Multimedia Super Corridor. Its mission is to promote software development as one of the key careers of the future.

The programme is managed by Derrik Khoo, who is also the chief executive officer of Brave & Bold Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of Patimas Computers Bhd. MyPC members will be required to pay a membership fee of RM1,000 for the entire duration of an academic year (eight months).

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