

### Functional equation with twice iterated function.

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Find all functions  $f: \mathbb{R}^+ \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^+$  such that satisfies to equation  $f(f(x)) + af(x) = bx$ , where  $a, b > 0$ .

#### Solution by Arkady Alt, San Jose, California, USA.

I. Lets try to find linear function that satisfies to the functional equation, namely let  $f(x) = kx$ , where  $k > 0$  because  $f: \mathbb{R}^+ \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^+$ . Then  $f(f(x)) = k^2x$  and  $f(f(x)) + af(x) = bx$  becomes  $k^2x + akx = bx, \forall x > 0 \Leftrightarrow k^2 + ak - b = 0$ .

Let  $k_1 = \frac{\sqrt{a^2 + 4b} - a}{2}, k_2 = \frac{\sqrt{a^2 + 4b} + a}{2} > k_1$ , that is  $k_1, -k_2$  be roots of the latter equation.

II. For any  $n \in \mathbb{N} \cup \{0\}$  we define recursively function  $f_n(x)$  by

$$\begin{cases} f_0(x) := x \\ f_n(x) = f(f_{n-1}(x)), n \in \mathbb{N} \end{cases}$$

Then by replacing  $x$  in  $f(f(x)) + af(x) = bx$  with  $f_{n-1}(x), n \in \mathbb{N}$  we obtain for  $(f_n(x))$  the following recurrence

$$(1) \quad f_{n+1}(x) + af_n(x) - bf_{n-1}(x) = 0, n \in \mathbb{N}.$$

We have  $f_1(x) = f(x) = 0 \cdot x + 1 \cdot f(x), f_2(x) + af_1(x) = bx \Leftrightarrow f_2(x) = bx - af(x), f_3(x) + af_2(x) = bf_1(x) \Leftrightarrow f_3(x) = bf(x) - a(bx - af(x)) = -abx + (a^2 + b)f(x), \dots$

That is  $f_n(x)$  can be represented in form of linear combination of  $x$  and  $f(x)$ , namely  $f_n(x) = b_nx + a_nf(x), n \in \mathbb{N} \cup \{0\}$ . Then by substitution  $f_n(x)$  in such

form in (1) we obtain  $b_{n+1}x + a_{n+1}f(x) + a(b_nx + a_nf(x)) - b(b_{n-1}x + a_{n-1}f(x)) = 0 \Rightarrow$

$$(2) \quad \begin{cases} b_{n+1} + a \cdot b_n - b \cdot b_{n-1} = 0 \\ a_{n+1} + a \cdot a_n - b \cdot a_{n-1} = 0 \end{cases} \Leftrightarrow \begin{cases} b_{n+1} = -a \cdot b_n + b \cdot b_{n-1} \\ a_{n+1} = -a \cdot a_n + b \cdot a_{n-1} \end{cases}, n \in \mathbb{N}$$

with initial conditions  $b_0 = 1, b_1 = 0, a_0 = 0, a_1 = 1$ .

We have  $b_2 = b > 0, b_3 = -ab < 0, a_2 = -a < 0, a_3 = a^2 + b > 0$

and for any  $n \in \mathbb{N}$  assuming  $b_{2n} > 0, b_{2n+1} < 0, a_{2n} < 0, a_{2n+1} > 0$  we obtain

using (2)  $b_{2n+2} = -a \cdot b_{2n+1} + b \cdot b_{2n} > 0, b_{2n+3} = -a \cdot b_{2n+2} + b \cdot b_{2n+1} < 0,$

$a_{2n+2} = -a \cdot a_{2n+1} + b \cdot a_{2n} < 0, a_{2n+3} = -a \cdot a_{2n+2} + b \cdot a_{2n+1} > 0.$

Thus, by MI for any  $n \in \mathbb{N}$  holds  $b_{2n} > 0, b_{2n+1} < 0, a_{2n} < 0, a_{2n+1} > 0$ .

III. Since  $f_n(x) > 0$  for any  $x \in \mathbb{R}^+$  then  $b_{2n}x + a_{2n}f(x) > 0 \Leftrightarrow b_{2n}x > -a_{2n}f(x) \Leftrightarrow f(x) < -\frac{b_{2n}x}{a_{2n}}$  and  $b_{2n+1}x + a_{2n+1}f(x) > 0 \Leftrightarrow f(x) > -\frac{b_{2n+1}x}{a_{2n+1}}, n \in \mathbb{N}.$

Thus,  $-\frac{b_{2n+1}x}{a_{2n+1}} < f(x) < -\frac{b_{2n}x}{a_{2n}}, n \in \mathbb{N}.$

Noting that  $b_n = c_1k_1^n + c_2(-k_2)^n, a_n = d_1k_1^n + d_2(-k_2)^n$  and taking in account

that  $0 < \frac{k_1}{k_2} < 1$  we obtain  $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{b_n}{a_n} = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{c_1k_1^n + c_2(-k_2)^n}{d_1k_1^n + d_2(-k_2)^n} = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{c_1 \left(\frac{-k_1}{k_2}\right)^n + c_2}{d_1 \left(\frac{-k_1}{k_2}\right)^n + d_2} = \frac{c_2}{d_2}.$

Since  $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{b_{2n}}{a_{2n}} = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{b_{2n+1}}{a_{2n+1}} = \frac{c_2}{d_2}$  then by Squeeze Principle  $f(x) = \frac{c_2}{d_2}x.$

From initial conditions  $\begin{cases} c_1 + c_2 = b_0 = 1 \\ c_1 k_1 - c_2 k_2 = b_1 = 0 \end{cases}$  and  $\begin{cases} d_1 + d_2 = a_0 = 0 \\ d_1 k_1 - d_2 k_2 = a_1 = 1 \end{cases}$

we obtain  $\frac{c_2}{d_2} = k_1$  and, therefore,  $f(x) = k_1 x = \frac{\sqrt{a^2 + 4b} - a}{2} x$ .

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