

Are Computer Professionals Still Geeks?

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Computer technology and information technology impact on almost every aspect of modern life. As a result the number and variety of career opportunities in this industry have increased dramatically over recent times. The question this group of students looked at was

‘Just how do schoolchildren in years 5 to 8 perceive careers in the I.T. industry?’

Underlying questions that we looked at were:

- Are school children in years 5 to 8 thinking about career options?
- Do children in this age group understand what the I.T. industry is?
- Is there still a ‘geek’ image associated with computer professionals?

Sample size: 165 children from primary and intermediate schools in selected areas that are believed to represent a broad cross section of the community.

Availability of Computers

- 90% have access to a computer, and 75% have a computer system in their own home. The survey results also showed evidence that computing to children in this age group is seen as a form of entertainment as opposed to being a tool that assists with the completion of tasks.

Career Prospects

- 90% of the group use a computer in the home.

about what type of career they would like. More traditional careers were chosen compared with I.T. related careers.

- Figure 1 refers to their thoughts on which careers use a computer.
- 44% of the girls thought that computers would not be used in their choice of occupation compared with 28% of the boys.

Awareness of the I.T. Industry

- The majority knows what I.T. stands for but this understanding is not at a technical level.
- Many of the children appear to identify computer professionals as men with short hair, wearing glasses.
- Many claim to be aware of some of the professions within the industry, but this could be attributed to familiarity, for example, the greatest majority claimed to have an interest in designing web sites, yet this may be from having experience with the Internet or ‘surfing the net’.

The results, surprising given the high availability of technology did not translate to an overall awareness of the opportunities available in the I.T. industry. Could it be that they are just too young to care ... at the moment?

Researchers:

Students: G. Robertson, G. Still, P. Baskerville, L. Quarrie, G. McLellan, A. Simpson, K. Wang.

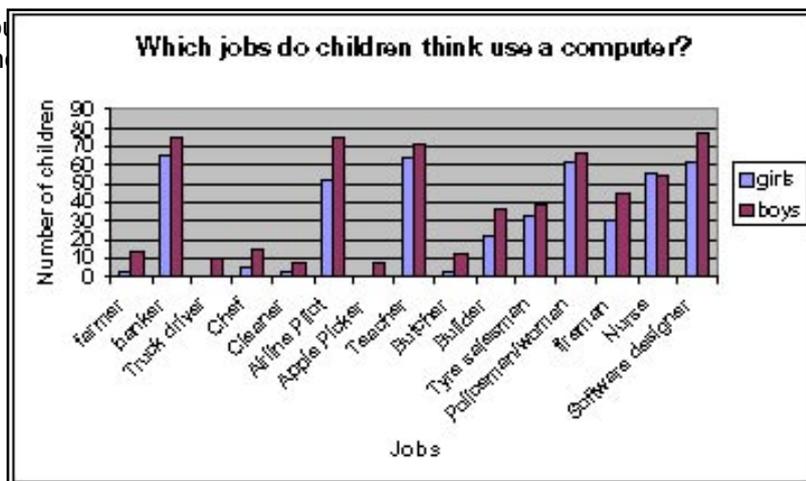


Figure 1: Which jobs do children think use a computer