

shown examples and then asked to solve similar problems. Usually the program keeps score of how well the pupil does. It even offers encouragement when the pupil gets the answer right, and makes a gentle suggestion to 'try again' when the answer is wrong.

Deciding which programs are right for your child depends on several things: the age of your child, the make of your computer and what your child is studying at school.

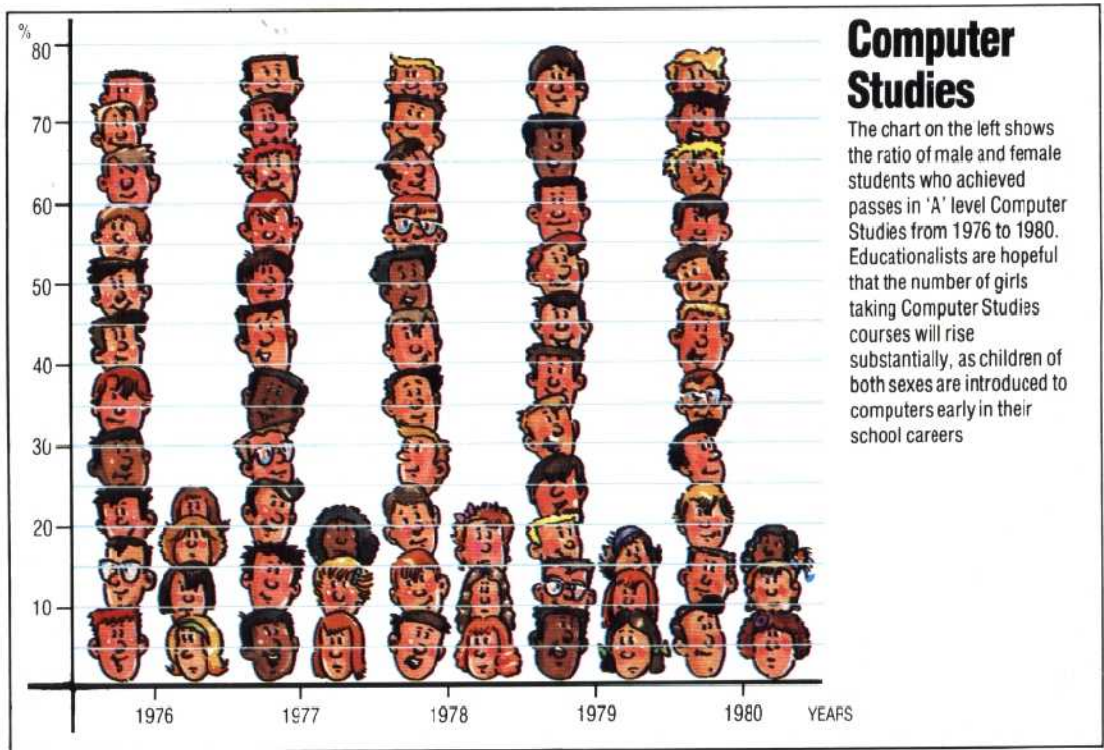
If you have yet to buy your home computer but you suspect that education will be one of its important roles in the home, it is worth finding out which type of computer is being used in your child's school. If you are able to purchase a similar model, the education programs your child is using at school will be available to you at home. Many schools are delighted to offer parents copies of the programs they are using in class and this 'homework' can have a considerable benefit. If

advertise in the computer magazines and home computer shops.

## The Right Choice

For the under eights most programs concentrate on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. One of the attractive ranges of educational software for very young children is produced by Texas Instruments. The TI-99/4A Home Computer has been slow to catch on in Britain, but many parents have been impressed by the range of TI educational software produced by both TI and Scott, Foresman & Co. in the USA. The 99/4A is actually a 16-bit computer and this means that programs written in machine code are likely to be very much better than programs written on the more usual 8-bit home computers.

This is proved by such TI programs as 'Begin-



### Computer Studies

The chart on the left shows the ratio of male and female students who achieved passes in 'A' level Computer Studies from 1976 to 1980. Educationalists are hopeful that the number of girls taking Computer Studies courses will rise substantially, as children of both sexes are introduced to computers early in their school careers

ANNI AXWORTHY

you have already bought your home computer and it is not compatible with the school's computers, don't despair; there is value in the very variety of computing experience your child is receiving.

It is natural that more educational programs are available for the better established computers, but some manufacturers have placed a particular emphasis on education. There are particularly wide ranges of educational programs available for the Apple, the Commodore PET, the Tandy, the BBC Micro, Sinclair and Texas Instruments but some of the newer manufacturers have yet to attract a really wide range of programs. Educational programs for any computer are likely to be available from several sources. The manufacturer of the computer is one, and the various independent software houses is another. The latter write programs for computers and

ning Grammar', 'Addition and Subtraction' (1 and 2) and 'Number Magic'. These programs are stored on a plastic cartridge, which slots into the TI 99/4A and is easy for very young children to use. And if you've splashed out on the marvellous little voice synthesiser add-on for the 99/4A, you will know that several of the programs talk in a Dalek-type voice children love. The problem is that the programs are American. The odd word is spelled differently and some British teachers would be likely to go into paroxysms over some of the TI programs. However TI has a stunning example of LOGO available (see page 34), although this really falls into the second category of discovery tools.

There is a good choice of programs available for home computers. A comprehensive selection can be found in *Educational Computing*. Here you will also find the program houses advertising their