not as great as it might be. Nevertheless it is essential reading not only for students in this field but for all those employed in this vital area of education. It is a pity, however, that some important issues have either been glossed over or omitted altogether. Issues such as provision for under-threes are regrettably ignored.

HIGHERS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Andrew McPherson, David Raffe, Chris Robertson [Association of University Teachers (Scotland), Edinburgh, 1990] pp 59, £5.00

DOUGLAS WEIR

This is a brief report, one in a series of four commissioned from the authors to help AUT(s) bring to the attention of the general public and the members of the Howie Committee, who are currently reviewing the Scottish ‘Higher’, some of the implications of school course structures for the level of participation in post-compulsory education.

It is presented in a very unattractive style both externally, in a plain blue wrapper, and internally, with little variation in typeface or through tables, to help the reader and justify its cover price.

Nevertheless, in a straightforward and relatively uncomplicated way, the authors draw attention to a number of significant factors which anyone seeking to change the ‘Highers’ should ignore at their peril.

* The ‘Christmas leaver’ in Scotland is encouraged to sit Highers because, having been compelled to stay for half the course, he/she might as well stay until the following May to sit the exam.

* Standard Grade induces a sense of optimism of achievement in Highers among some pupils which would be less easy to sustain if Highers were made more difficult or stretched to two years.

* Desire to enter higher education is increased because it is still possible to do so at the end of S5; having no chance of entry after S5 would be a ‘turn off’ for some pupils.

* A one-year Higher is more suited to the demands of a number of jobs than either a two-year Higher or leaving only with ‘S’ Grade.

It is therefore difficult to read the evidence from this careful study and come to any conclusion other than that the one-year Higher has significant benefits. It encourages young people to continue in full-time education; it caters for a broad range of ability; it offers a range of options to participants, both in higher education and in the labour market.

This is not to suggest that the authors wish to campaign against any change in post-16 provision but rather that they wish any change to safeguard the present benefits which flow from the Scottish Higher.

If the Howie Committee can make proposals which are likely to maintain these benefits while improving the quality and quantity of entrants to higher education and the labour market, the report will have served many of its purposes.