# A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UK AND THE US

## Introduction

The United Kingdom and the United States have strong, exceptional higher education standards compared to other countries in Europe and America. Specifically, the US has been ranked as the best country in reference to higher education followed by the UK. In the UK and US, the universities offer quality education in a world-class research environment coupled with unparalleled state of the art facilities. The Quality of education has been the subject of debate in the international system. To meet the standards, funding, and improvement in performance and ensure public trust, a collective majority of countries implement certain strategies as a measure of promoting quality education. The funding and quality of education in the US and the UK have been the subject of debate, and that forms the basis of analysis in this paper.

Higher education in the UK has witnessed a tremendous expansion in the recent past. The rising number of student admission in schools has occasioned the expansion of learning institutions in the UK. Funding of education in the UK has been on the decline. Greenaway and Haynes (2003: 152) argue that public funding for education has declined to a greater extent. On the other hand, private funding has increased and is currently contributing close to a third on average of the higher education institutions. In 2004 the Higher Education Act was enacted, and its implementation occurred in 2006 (Orkodashvili 2009: 1-43). The Act introduced numerous changes in the funding system. The up-front fee was abolished and replaced with deferred fees. Orkodashvili (2009: 1-43) states that the bursaries and the grants were reinstated for the poor students. The debts accrued by the students are paid at a fixed rate of 9% of the income above certain earning limits. Through the funding system, the number of students gaining admission in the institutions has gone up significantly. The government grants for higher education are distributed on an individual basis. Most of the funding in the institutions of higher learning comes from the fees. However, the government regulates the amount that institutions can charge. The quality of education in the UK is the best compared to other countries. Yorke and Vidovich (2016: 2) state that some reforms have been introduced to guarantee quality of education in learning institutions. For instance, subject benchmarking, quality assurance programs and properly established assessment modules have been developed to improve the education quality (Yorke and Vidovich 2016: 2).

When it comes to funding of universities in the US, there is diversity in the funding options. There are multiple sources where education funding is derived from, and they include federal government, local state agencies, and grants (Orkodashvili 2009: 1-43). However, the funding of institutions of higher learning has been on the decline in the recent past. Orkodashvili (2009: 1-43) argues that through the decline in the state appropriations, the universities have had to increase the fees. Tuition fees in the US have increased steadily to the extent that many of the students have been left with huge debts. The average fee paid in a noncompetitive institution is $29, 195 for a four-year course (Orkodashvili (2009: 1-43). When it comes to quality of education, the US has struggled to remain at par with some of its peers such as the UK. Yorke and Vidovich (2016: 2) argue that the introduction of “A Test of Leaders” program introduced by the Department of Education test the graduates for the quality received a backlash from stakeholders and academicians. The harmonisation designed to create common standards of quality has not been a success in the US. Comparative analysis of the two countries above indicates that the UK remains the better option when it comes to higher education. While the US has diverse sources of funding for higher education, the fee charged remains relatively high. Consequently, the standards of education have not been harmonised to the level witnessed in the UK. In comparison, the Quality of education in the UK is relatively higher compared to the US (Li and Day 2016: 2). Although the funding of education in the UK remains competitive, the fees paid are fairly regulated, and poor students are awarded bursaries and grants.

## Conclusion

The funding and quality of education in the US and the UK have been the subject of debate over the years. Based on the analysis above, it is imperative to underscore that the UK offers the best option because of the funding system and quality of education. While higher education in the US has a diverse funding base, the same has declined over the years, and the net effect has been the hiked fees, which has affected the students through debt accumulation.

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