

Haunted by the Undead: Social class inequalities in British education

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Austerity education is not only about a turn to repressive control of disciplined workforce as the conditions of work and life are worsened for the majority of citizens. It is also about the rightist project of capturing public space such as schools to actively produce politically illiterate, socially uncritical, and un-self critical subject positions for youth to occupy.

(Saltman 2014: 55)

In the age of austerity subjects are formed through repressive pedagogies. Punitive disciplinary practices and policies including hierarchical surveillance, security apparatus, militarization, and punishment target working class and poor students.....such expanded repressive control is part of the broader economic and cultural market fundamentalism that rolls back social investment, support, and care and rolls out new investment in punishment, containment, and coercion, making youth into commodities.

(Saltman 2014: 43)

‘I actually hated it, it was like a military camp, you had to walk in silence, chant these mantras, wear suits. The last straw was when one of my best friends was asked to leave for talking in the corridor’. I did try and talk to my head of year. , and he said ‘but this is what they do in Detroit, this is what they do in Harlem, and they get results’. And I was like this is unbelievable what sort of results can you get when none of the kids are allowed to express themselves?’ and I said “how can kids express themselves when there are all these rules?”

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I'm a primary school headteacher... I'm horrified at the local secondary academy's strict rules where kids can't say 'no'

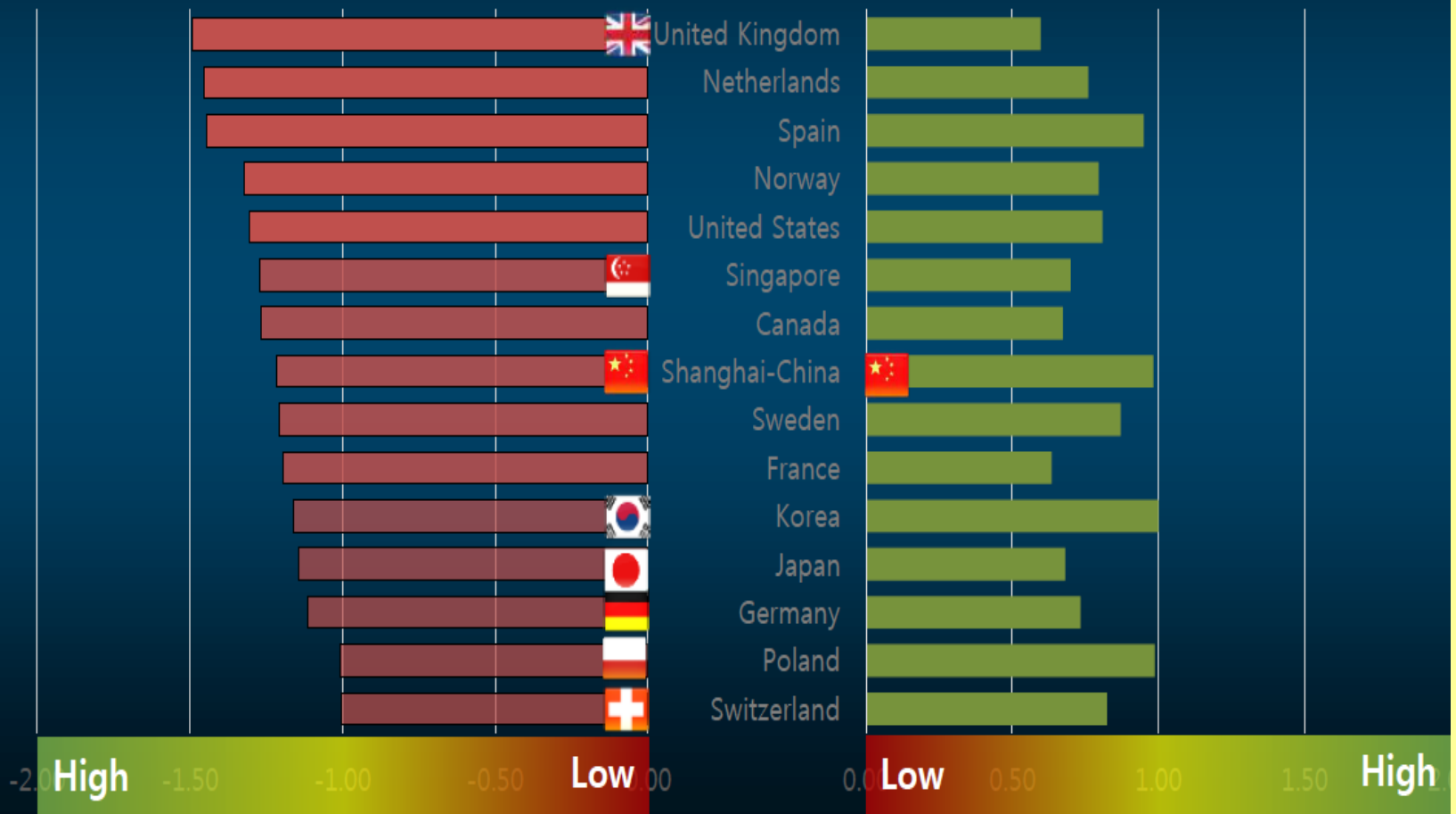
Yusuf Gleason said Mossbourne Community Academy "should be ashamed" of how it treats children, adding: "They have such draconian education policies you would think they don't care." The school's behavioural policy warns students not to talk in the corridors, obey staff without question and bans distinct hairline shaping.

Mr Gleason said the academy chain in Hackney, [East London](#), is "instilling fear into children". "I know students who have learning difficulties and these academies make their lives hell."

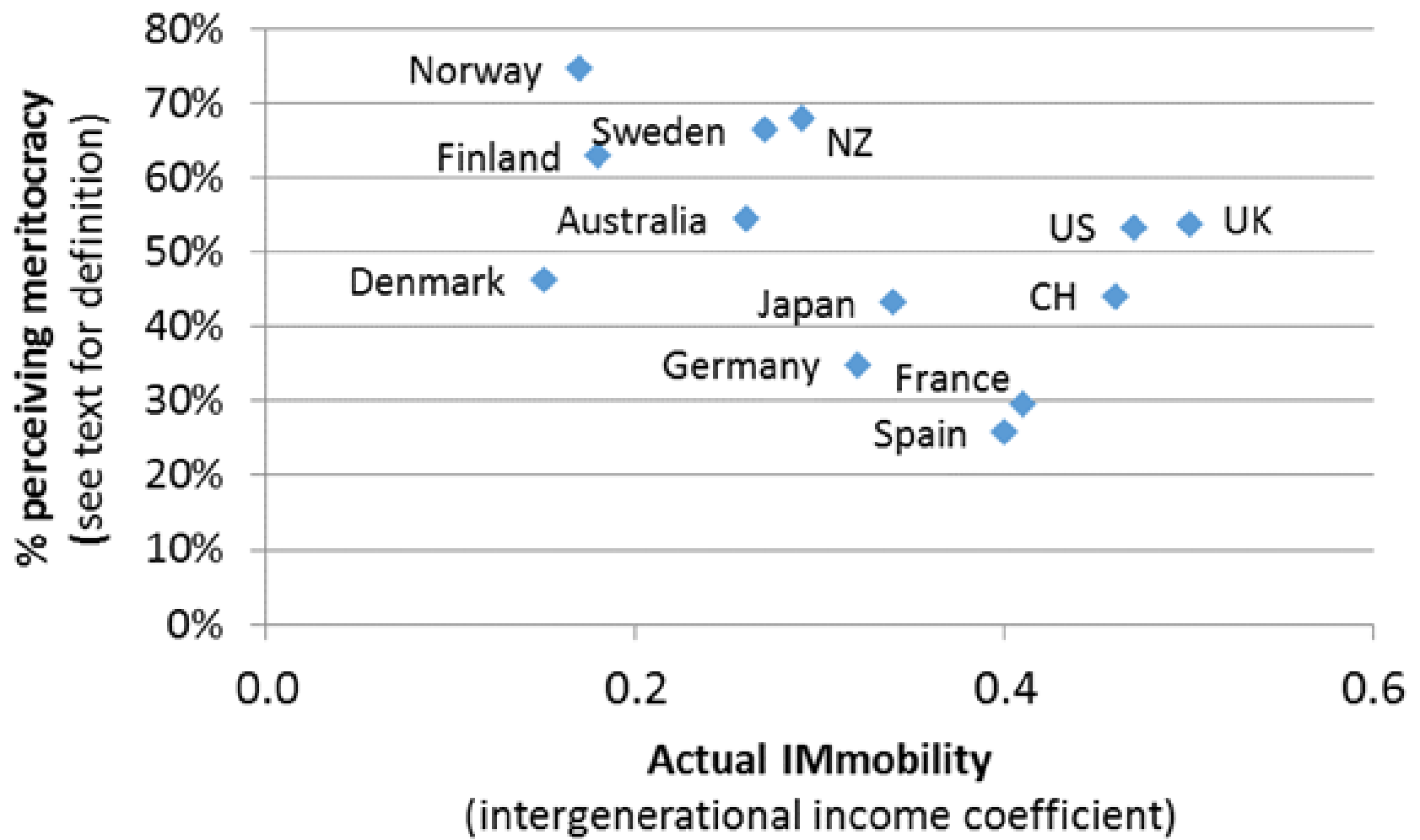
Starting with the assumption we are not a racist society and now that we are a classless society, the problems are being swept away so no one has to deal with these issues. People are no longer privileged because they are white, they are no longer privileged because they are middle class. It's scary. It's frightening. What also frightens me is that after one hundred years of state education we are still not sure why we are educating the working classes. There are no jobs for them and the Government doesn't want thinkers. They just need people to be controlled in the classroom, to keep them busy, churning out a whole lot of facts, keep them so busy they don't have time to analyse, no time to question the way things are. Schools are becoming like businesses and a business is nothing to do with all those things we have been talking about. It is about efficiency, money, productivity and so things like human rights and social justice just go right off the agenda (Cassie).

Prevalence of **memorisation**
rehearsal, routine exercises, drill and
practice and/or repetition

Prevalence of **elaboration**
reasoning, deep learning, intrinsic
motivation, critical thinking,
creativity, non-routine problems



The Sutton Trust report: *Global Gaps: Comparing socio-economic gaps in the performance of highly able UK pupils internationally* looked at the 2015 Pisa results. It found that the gap between the middle and working class within what it calls ‘the top 10% most able students’ in each class grouping was 33 months in science and maths and 32 months in reading. This rose to a three year gap in reading between high achieving working class girls and their high achieving middle class peers.



Social well-being depends upon cohesion and solidarity. It implies the existence, not merely of opportunities to ascend, but of a high level of general culture, and a strong sense of common interests, and a diffusion throughout society of a conviction that civilization is not the business of an elite alone, but a common enterprise which is the concern of all. And individual happiness does not only require that men (sic) should be free to rise to new positions of comfort and distinction; it also requires that they should be able to lead a life of dignity and culture , whether they rise or not (Tawney 1964: 108)