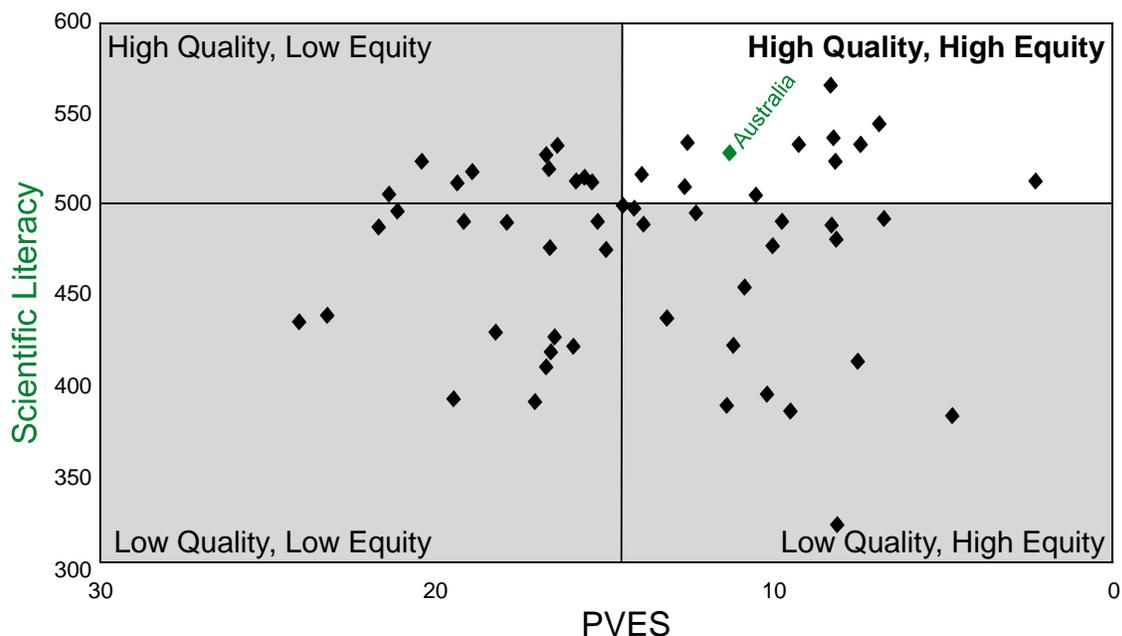


Does Australia have a World-Class Education System? Evidence from PISA 2006

High Quality, High Equity

Countries participating in PISA can be compared not only in terms of average student performance (a measure of ‘quality’), but also on the extent to which students’ test performances are related to their socioeconomic backgrounds. If this relationship is relatively weak, then that indicates a relatively high level of ‘equity’ in the country.

The following graph plots the average Scientific Literacy score in each country against a measure of the percentage of variance in students’ scores explained by their socioeconomic backgrounds (PVES). Countries are identified as being above or below the OECD mean on each of these two measures, providing four quadrants. Australia is in the top right quadrant, indicating above average performance in Scientific Literacy and a below-average impact of SES on student achievement. Australia, and a number of other countries, including Finland, Hong Kong-China, Japan and Canada, can be described as High Quality, High Equity.



Although Australia as a whole is in the top right quadrant, some of our states and territories are not. In Scientific Literacy in 2006, the ACT and Tasmania were in the High Quality, Low Equity quadrant, and the Northern Territory was in the Low Quality, Low Equity quadrant.

In Mathematical Literacy, Australia was categorised as a High Quality, High Equity country in PISA 2003. This was unchanged in 2006.

In Reading Literacy, the strength of the relationship between students' scores and their socioeconomic backgrounds decreased since PISA 2000. In 2000, Australia was categorised as High Quality but Low Equity. In 2006, Australia is categorised as High Quality, High Equity in Reading Literacy.