

Research reveals Australia could make better use of migrant teachers

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(PhysOrg.com) -- New research has revealed that overseas-trained teachers are not being used to their full potential in Australia.

Researchers from the University of Western Sydney and the University of Technology Sydney have surveyed 272 migrant teachers living in [Australia](#) as part of the 'Globalisation and Teacher Movements' research project.

The results of the survey revealed that 30% of the teachers were dissatisfied with their experience of migrating to Australia, and 40% had experienced significant periods of unemployment since their arrival.

Associate Professor Carol Reid, from the Centre for Educational Research and the School of Education at UWS, was the lead researcher on the three-year UWS and UTS project.

Associate Professor Reid says the aim of the research was to understand the global movements of teachers, including the circumstances in which they migrate to Australia.

"Australia is facing teacher shortages, predominately in the disciplines of Science, Technology, Mathematics and some languages and in the regional areas of WA, SA and NSW and the metropolitan areas of south west and western Sydney," says Associate Professor Reid.

"As the recruitment of overseas talent has long been considered a

solution to the problem, it is important to develop an understanding of what attracts international teachers to our shores and what we can do to keep them here."

The research found that Australia could be doing much more to attract skilled migrants and crucial changes are needed to make the immigration processes more effective and user-friendly.

"A common complaint from migrant teachers is that their expectations of working in Australia do not match their experiences," says Associate Professor Reid.

"Many move to Australia under the belief that their skills will be in high demand, only to find that the teacher shortages are confined to remote and regional areas and specific disciplines, and that relocation within Australia is extremely difficult."

The final 'Globalisation and Teacher Movements' research report provides detailed recommendations for how to remedy this "mismatch" and improve the attraction and retention of immigrant teachers in Australia, including:

- * Streamlining the teacher registration, recruitment and induction processes throughout all states and territories to improve teacher mobility.
- * Increasing the transparency of migration policies and processes and improving communication with migrants to ensure they understand the realities of working in Australia.
- * Increasing opportunities for migrant teachers to secure permanent teaching positions.

* Formally recognising and rewarding overseas teaching, skills and experiences in terms of income and opportunities.

* Providing personalised connections and support to address any problems that the migrant teacher may encounter across all areas of their personal and professional lives, particularly within the first six months of their arrival.

Associate Professor Reid says, by looking after our skilled migrants, Australia would be making a worthy investment in its future.

"The UWS and UTS research has found that a substantial majority of immigrant teachers plan to stay in Australia and continue teaching over the next five years," says Associate Professor Reid.

"Migrants bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience, can enrich the cultural fabric of our towns and cities, and contribute to a more outward looking and inclusive Australia.

"Just as migrants were essential to the growth of our country in the last century, skilled migrants are again needed to fill labour shortages, especially in regional and rural Australia."

Provided by University of Western Sydney

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