

Get “Re-recognized”: Overseas-Trained Teachers in Australia

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Abstract: This research examines the current accreditation framework in Australia and its impact on the mobility of overseas-qualified teachers. Amidst a growing demand for educators, the framework presents both opportunities and barriers for teachers trained outside Australia, particularly those from non-English speaking backgrounds. Employing a qualitative analysis of regulatory documents and policies across various Australian states, this study explores the specific requirements, processes, and challenges involved in the recognition and accreditation of overseas teaching qualifications. Key findings indicate that the framework's complexity and lack of uniformity across states contribute significantly to the difficulties experienced by overseas-trained teachers. These issues are compounded by inadequate guidance and support, as well as rigid language proficiency requirements, which further hinder the integration of these teachers into the Australian education system. The research proposes several improvements to enhance the framework's effectiveness, including the provision of clearer, tailored guidance for overseas-trained teachers, adoption of more inclusive language assessment standards modeled after successful international examples, and the expansion of bridging programs. Implementing these recommendations could optimise the accreditation process, facilitate greater mobility for overseas-qualified teachers, and ultimately enrich the educational landscape in Australia.

Keywords: Accreditation Framework; Mobility; Overseas-qualified Teachers; Recognition; Education System; Australia.

1. Introduction

The recognition and accreditation of overseas teaching qualifications are critical for ensuring the quality and standards of education in Australia. As an English-speaking country, Australia is an appealing destination for teachers with overseas qualifications; however, they represent a smaller proportion of the teaching workforce compared to the percentage of migrants in the general population and the proportion of overseas-qualified professionals in other industries. In 2018, only about 17% of teachers in New South Wales, South Australia, and Northern Territory were born overseas, which is significantly lower than the 29% in the overall Australian population. This gap is more pronounced when comparing with the working-age population (15 to 64 years), where 33.6% were born overseas in 2020 [5]. According to Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) [7], six percent of classroom teachers in 2020 were foreign-born with their ITE credentials acquired abroad. The proportion of participants with foreign credentials rose by three percentage points between 2019 (3%) and 2020 (6%), though this shift could be influenced by survey response rates within this group. Comparing with the significant presence of migrant communities, there is a notable gap in addressing the specific needs of these migrant teachers and students. The current accreditation framework for overseas teaching qualifications in Australia presents various challenges and barriers for these teachers.

When talking about the cross-border recognition of teachers, several criteria are considered: the formal and social recognition of individuals as teachers, the relevance of their training and knowledge to the teaching position, their integration and potential marginalization within school communities, and the opportunities that are available or denied to them [43]. The delayed recognition happens due to varied standards in different countries and the lack of mutual recognition in a global scale. My interest in this area stems

from my own experiences as an overseas-qualified teacher and from observing the challenges faced by my friends in navigating the recognition and accreditation process. The decision to examine the accreditation framework rather than individual experiences is driven by the recognition that structural issues often underlie the personal difficulties reported by overseas-qualified teachers [64]. These issues encompass intricate and lengthy recognition procedures, inconsistent criteria, and inadequate support systems. As an aspiring researcher, I am keen to explore these issues further and to contribute to the development of policies and practices that support the integration of overseas-qualified teachers into the Australian education system [28]. By analyzing the framework itself, this study aims to identify and understand the bureaucratic and regulatory hurdles that significantly impact teacher mobility and integration. This approach not only adds a macro-level dimension to the discourse but also aligns with the broader educational policies and workforce needs in Australia [6].

The rationale behind this focus is grounded in the potential for systemic change. This research underscores the importance of examining the current accreditation framework in Australia and its effects on the experiences of overseas-trained teachers. Previous studies have predominantly focused on the personal and professional experiences of these teachers. However, this study aims to delve into the underlying structures-specifically, the accreditation framework-that shape these experiences. By investigating why these experiences are often challenging, this research seeks to identify potential improvements and optimizations that could enhance the overall experience of overseas-trained teachers. While individual narratives are invaluable for highlighting specific instances of hardship and success, examining the framework allows for the identification of widespread, common issues that, once addressed, could benefit a larger segment of the teacher population. Thus, the focus extends beyond individual experiences to the systemic

factors that influence them, aiming to contribute to more effective policy and practice in teacher accreditation. This research aims to contribute to a more effective and inclusive educational policy that supports the integration of overseas-qualified teachers.

While this project examines the recognition of teachers in general, it will consider the particular challenges faced by those with TESOL qualifications. Globalization has significantly increased the global demand for English language proficiency, highlighting the importance of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Professionals in this field, specializing in English as an Additional Language (EAL), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and English as a Second Language (ESL), are collectively referred to as TESOL educators. In response to this growing need, countries like Australia have been actively recruiting overseas-qualified TESOL teachers to diversify and strengthen their educational frameworks [36, 63]. As of mid-2023, Australia's overseas-born population, significantly originating from linguistically diverse countries such as India, China, and New Zealand, has emphasized the critical requirement for teachers proficient in navigating multilingual classrooms [2]. The amount of international students in Australia reflects this requirement with an increase of 53.9% from December 2015 to December 2020 [35]. The latest data from January to December 2022 detail the distribution: Higher Education hosts 361,247 students, accounting for approximately 45.9% of all international students; Vocational Education and Training (VET) includes 273,838 students, making up about 34.8%; English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) cater to 79,362 students, which is roughly 10.1%; schools have 11,873 students, or 1.5%; and non-award programs include 20,067 students, approximately 2.5% of the total. The majority of these students originate from China and India, with Chinese students making up nearly 19.8% of the international student body, followed by Indian students who represent about 12.7%. Despite this diversity, these overseas-trained educators encounter considerable barriers within the Australian education system [28], mainly due to the stringent and complex accreditation processes required to recognize their qualifications. Addressing these challenges is essential for Australia to effectively integrate these skilled educators, enhance the educational experience for its diverse migrant student body, and truly leverage the potential of TESOL in fostering educational inclusivity.

This research revolves around the question: How does the current accreditation framework in Australia affect overseas-qualified teachers' mobility? This question involves these following aspects:

What are the specific requirements and processes involved in the recognition and accreditation of overseas teaching qualifications in Australia?

What are the primary barriers and challenges faced by overseas-qualified teachers in the recognition framework when seeking accreditation?

What support mechanisms and resources are available to assist overseas-qualified teachers in navigating the recognition and accreditation process and addressing any barriers they may encounter?

What is the situation of overseas-qualified teachers under current framework?

What potential improvements can be made to the framework to better support overseas-qualified teachers and

enhance their integration into the Australian education system?

Through tackling these issues, the study can yield significant understandings regarding the efficiency and equity of the accreditation and recognition procedures, pinpoint avenues for enhancement or modification, and ultimately enhance the assimilation and prosperity of foreign-trained educators in Australian schools.

Overseas teaching qualifications in this project refers to the initial teacher education qualifications and registration licensing obtained by individuals from institutions outside of Australia, which qualify them to work as teachers in their home countries. These qualifications can differ in terms of content, duration, pedagogical approaches, and need to be recognized in order to practice within the Australian context.

The accreditation framework consists of the policies and procedures developed by Australian teacher regulatory authorities to assess and recognise the equivalency of foreign school teaching qualifications. It specifies the standards and steps that overseas-trained teachers must follow to obtain registration to teach in Australian school settings.

Teachers' mobility concerns the impact of the accreditation framework on the ability of teachers trained overseas to move or transition into teaching positions in Australia. This includes considerations such as the ease or difficulty of obtaining accreditation, the recognition of qualifications from different countries, and any barriers or challenges faced by teachers in navigating the accreditation process.

Specific requirements and processes means the detailed criteria, documentation, and steps involved in the assessment and approval of overseas teaching qualifications in Australian schools, including application procedures, documentation submission, assessment criteria, and timelines. Overseas-qualified teachers seeking accreditation in Australia face specific requirements and processes determined by regulatory bodies.

Barriers and challenges refers to the obstacles and difficulties encountered by overseas-qualified teachers during the recognition and accreditation process, such as language proficiency requirements, unfamiliarity with Australian educational standards, cultural differences, bureaucratic hurdles, and financial constraints.

Support mechanisms and resources in this research investigates the support systems available to assist overseas-qualified teachers in understanding and navigating the recognition and accreditation process. Support mechanisms may include guidance, online resources, training programs, and access to resources aimed at helping teachers overcome barriers and challenges during the accreditation process.

Consequences of the current framework examines the outcomes and implications of the current accreditation framework for overseas-qualified teachers. The consequences may include the impact of the accreditation framework on teachers' professional development, employment opportunities, and overall integration into the Australian education system [28].

Potential improvements to the framework explores potential enhancements and modifications to the current accreditation framework to better support overseas-qualified teachers. Improvements may involve revising accreditation criteria, streamlining processes, providing additional support services, and enhancing cultural awareness and sensitivity among stakeholders.

In summary, the current recognition framework for foreign trained teachers should be questioned and scrutinized. This

research aims to give a thorough grasp of the difficulties and obstacles experienced by instructors with foreign qualifications in the accreditation process and to identify strategies for improving the current framework to support their mobility and integration into the Australian education system [28].

2. Literature Review

Due to various socio-economic factors and policy changes, the phenomenon of teacher migration and the cross-border recognition of teaching qualifications is a significant topic within the global education sector, particularly in the context of English language teaching. This literature review aims to explore the complexities and challenges faced by overseas-trained English teachers in Australia by examining four critical areas: teacher migration in a global context, the influx of teachers migrating to Australia, the ongoing teacher shortage in Australia, and the challenges of cross-border recognition for teachers qualified outside Australia. By examining these interconnected themes, this review seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the factors driving teacher mobility and the implications for educational policy and practice. The emphasis on English-speaking qualifications is deliberate, as English occupies a unique position in global education systems. It serves not only as a compulsory subject in many countries but also as the global lingua franca, making the recognition of English teaching qualifications a particularly salient issue. As highlighted by Crystal [23] and Eapen [34], English is a mandatory part of the curriculum in many countries around the world, further complicating the recognition process for English teachers. This dual role of English underscores the necessity of examining the recognition of English teaching qualifications separately from other subjects, such as the recognition of a China-trained science teacher in Cambodia, which, while important, falls outside the specific focus of this review.

2.1. Teacher Migration in Global Context

The teaching workforce has become increasingly mobile in recent years (Cho, 2010), with a notable surge in teacher mobility and migration over the past two decades. This increasingly prominent feature of the global education landscape is mainly driven by factors such as economic opportunities, professional development, and the demand for specific teaching skills. In certain countries, such as Australia and New Zealand, the presence of migrant teachers in the teaching workforce has been significant for decades. For instance, in 2006, approximately 16.95% of all teachers in Australia were born overseas [60]. Moreover, in New Zealand, over half of the applicants for vacant teaching positions in 2008 had completed their initial teacher education (ITE) in other countries [11].

Teacher migration within the global context can be broadly divided into two categories: teachers migrating for professional opportunities and students pursuing teacher-training programs overseas. Research by Collins [19] and Manik [46] highlights the complexities involved in teacher migration, including regulatory, professional, and socio-cultural challenges. These challenges are compounded by the varying standards and requirements for teacher certification across different countries, which can create significant barriers for migrant teachers seeking employment in their new countries of residence. Migrant teachers often face challenges in adapting to new educational environments, meeting local

certification requirements, and overcoming cultural and language barriers [15]. Chinese migrant teachers in Finland face challenges, as their qualifications are not recognized by the Finnish educational system, leaving them feeling disadvantaged, according to Liu, Dervin and Xu [45]. Similar to Ireland, the United States and Canada, migrant teachers in Australia may be compelled to restart part or all of their training due to non-recognition of their qualifications [49].

On the other hand, students who choose to pursue teacher-training programs overseas represent another significant aspect of global teacher migration. Their choices will be influenced by various elements, such as the speed and reliability of the selection process, the availability of work rights and citizenship options (for both themselves and their families), and the prospects for quality employment outcomes [38]. These students, thus, often seek education in countries known for their robust teacher education programs, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. Based on the report released by Australian Bureau of Statistics in 2023 (ABS, 2023), it is obvious that young adults enhance the nation's labor market through their skills and educational pursuits. In 2022-23, the median age of migrants arriving was 27, while the most common age was 25. Among these 25-year-old newcomers, 51 percent were international students and 24 percent were on working holiday visas. Their choices of going overseas and getting trained as teachers also meet the the need of their target countries. Australia's intention in recruiting international students as skilled migrants, for instance, is to enhance outcomes in skilled migration. The focus is to attract individuals who are able to immediately provide a positive impact on the Australian economy, labor market, and fiscal health [33, 38]. Research by Hawthorne [38] and Schmidt & McDaid [62] indicates that these students face distinct challenges, including adapting to different educational paradigms, navigating immigration policies, and eventually seeking recognition for their qualifications in either their home countries or third countries. The experiences of these students highlight the need for more streamlined and internationally recognized teacher certification processes.

2.2. Teachers' Migration to Australia

Australia attracts skilled professional immigrants from across the globe, including teachers, doctors, health professionals, and specialists in finance and management [60] as Australia's immigration policies have shifted to favor skilled and professional immigrants for both permanent and temporary residency [19, 60, 40]. This trend mirrors that of other Western nations that have also welcomed Australian professionals. In Australian schools in 2023, there were 311,655 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers [3], an increase of 1.4% from 2022. Dating back to the 1998 study by Kamler, Santoro, and Reid [64] involving 308 secondary schools in Victoria, it revealed that 2% of teachers were bicultural and born overseas. Of these teachers, 44% had teaching experience in their country of birth. Additionally, the study revealed that 42.7% of the schools surveyed employed at least one teacher who was born abroad.

Reid et al. [60] describe multiple pathways for immigrant teachers to join the Australian teaching workforce. One frequent method is through the annual skilled immigration intake, where overseas-trained teachers apply using their professional qualifications and human capital. Migrants with professional qualifications and experience in fields such as

education have been prioritized, and this prioritization is driven by the need for overseas-trained and educated teachers to supplement the Australian teaching workforce [20, 61, 64]. In 2020, 6% of classroom teachers were both foreign-born and had obtained their Initial Teacher Education (ITE) qualifications overseas, a rise from 3% in 2019 [8]. Teachers can also enter through the permanent skilled immigration program or on temporary visas such as the 457 Visa. Both these programs offer regional visas that mandate working in regional areas for 2-4 years. Some teachers participate in short-term exchange programs, like those between Australia and Canada, and later seek Australian teaching positions. Others arrive on tourist visas, discover an affinity for the country, and decide to embark on a teaching career. Additionally, some foreign students come to Australia to obtain teaching degree or graduate diploma and subsequently apply for a teaching visa. Despite worries about the integrity of the study-migration pathway, international students are a valuable asset to Australia. Recent reforms in Australia's skilled migration policy aim to optimize future outcomes for students by prioritizing graduates who possess improved English language skills, recent work experience in Australia, and professional training over those trained in trade sectors. In this scenario, international students will increasingly become savvy consumers of education and migration options — meticulously evaluating global opportunities to choose the best combination of study, migration, and lifestyle offerings, as Hawthorne [38] describes. Immigrant teachers might also come as the partners or spouses of skilled migrants or as skilled migrants in different fields and then transition to teaching. Teachers who join the workforce via migration are typically older compared to those entering with Australian ITE qualifications. In 2020, 59% of teachers with overseas ITE qualifications were over the age of 50, up from 42% in 2018, and a higher percentage than those with Australian ITE qualifications, of whom 52% were over 50 [8]. These diverse pathways highlight the various direct and indirect routes that international teachers take to enter the Australian education system [60].

2.3. The Need of Foreign Teachers in Australia

Teacher shortage is not a recent development [59, 71]. It is a phenomenon well-documented in Australia, Canada, the USA, and South Africa [9, 12, 64]. Teacher shortage continues to be a widespread issue throughout Australia. A recent report indicates that numerous schools are facing difficulties in staffing both full-time and casual teaching positions. New South Wales is experiencing the most acute shortage, nearly 2,000 full-time teaching roles remained vacant in NSW at the close of the previous year, leading to the merging or cancellation of 10,000 classes statewide. The situation is even more dire in rural areas. According to research from the e61 Institute, there is a notable lack of high-aptitude teachers in less advantaged areas of New South Wales high schools [18]. Currently, 175 high schools in the state are in need of English and math teachers, with teacher burnout being a frequently voiced concern [41]. In New Zealand, the teacher shortage is so severe that schools are poaching staff from one another, according to a school principal [76, 71]. Besides that, a significant number of workers across various sectors are contemplating leaving their current positions, and there are widespread reports of worker burnout, including teaching sector. In 2022, 5% of teachers expressed plans to exit the profession within the

following year. A growing number, now at 35%, plan to leave before reaching retirement age, up from 26% in 2019. Furthermore, while 46% of teachers in 2020 intended to stay until retirement, that figure dropped to 31% by 2022. One of the main reasons teachers consider leaving early is recognition and reward [8].

Australia is home to a lot of speakers of other languages due to its welcoming immigrant policy. As of June 30, 2023, the largest source countries of the overseas-born population in Australia are England, India, China, and New Zealand. Combined, these countries accounted for more than a third of all Australians born abroad [2]. The majority of migrants in Australia come from countries where English is either the primary language or is widely spoken and adopted, while China forms the largest group of migrants in Australia from countries where English is not the native language. China is also the leading source of international students in Australia, representing a significant portion of the total international student population. During the January-March 2024 period, Australia hosted a total of 687,840 international students. Of these, 148,121 students were from China, with 67,656 studying in New South Wales [30]. With approximately 22% of all international students in Australia were from China, the other four leading source countries are India with 17%, Nepal with 8%, the Philippines with 5%, and Vietnam also at 5%. Collectively, these countries account for 57% of the international student population in Australia, showcasing the dominance of Asian nations in contributing to Australia's educational diversity. It is a fact that many primary and secondary school students who migrate to Australia with their families do not possess a native-like command of English. Meanwhile, English is a compulsory subject in secondary schools across Australia (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [4]). These students, along with others from non-English speaking backgrounds, greatly benefit from educators who can communicate in their native languages. Thus, it is actually in need of a large amount of TESOL teachers. Apart from the teachers obtaining teaching degrees and completing Initial Teacher Education (ITE) here, on the other parts of the Earth, namely, the non-Anglophone countries, there're plenty of teachers who are currently doing the job of TESOL. However, Sharplin [64] also points out that there is limited research on the effectiveness of strategies employed to address these shortages, such as the importation of teachers or the recruitment of those with overseas qualifications. And to enhance the representation of overseas-qualified teachers, we need a more accessible and transparent framework for recognizing their qualifications.

2.4. Cross-border Recognition for Teachers Qualified Outside Australia

Despite the increasing presence of migrant teachers, it is paradoxical that teachers with qualifications earned abroad need their credentials endorsed by a national body before they can teach in Australia. Critics contend that overseas qualifications are frequently undervalued in Australia, with assessment criteria being outdated, inflexible, overly complex, and often resulting in racial discrimination [19]. The delayed recognition of teachers from non-local contexts is a common issue worldwide. This affects their ability to pursue a teaching career on par with local teachers, particularly in terms of salary, opportunities, and responsibilities [43]. A narrow discourse surrounding who can be recognized as a teacher has led to systematic and ongoing misrecognition of migrant

teachers in certain countries [47]. This misrecognition is highlighted by difficulties in the recognition of previous qualifications, also known as ‘re-credentialing’ [16, 47].

Extensive research has revealed numerous substantial challenges encountered by migrant teachers in Australia. These issues include navigating complex bureaucratic systems, as highlighted by Reid, Collins, & Singh [61] and Sharplin [64], and the struggle to have their professional qualifications acknowledged, as noted by Collins & Reid [20]. In their survey, 7.8% of the respondents noted that their qualifications were not recognized or appreciated. Language proficiency also poses a substantial barrier, with Kato [15] and Sharplin [64] documenting the difficulties in overcoming linguistic hurdles. The cultural clash in teaching philosophies and expectations is well-documented [15, 61, 64], suggesting a disconnect between migrant teachers' approaches and the prevailing norms in Australian schools. Furthermore, these teachers often face discrimination and racism, a significant concern raised by Collins & Reid [20] and Reid, Collins & Singh [61], which can impede their professional integration and personal well-being. These barriers collectively highlight the multifaceted challenges migrant teachers must navigate within the Australian educational system.

The challenges in the qualification recognition process are influenced by various structural elements, such as the structure of teacher training programs and curricula, as well as differences in school systems and academic fields [43]. While there are common challenges, distinct variations exist in the recognition processes—“easy mode” and “hard mode”. Teachers qualified in Anglophone countries typically experience a somewhat smoother and more straightforward recognition process, compared to their counterparts from non-English speaking countries. The recognition of teaching qualifications from Anglophone countries, such as the UK, the USA, Canada, and New Zealand, tends to be more straightforward due to the similarities in educational systems and the global dominance of the English language. Studies by Hawthorne [38] and Bense [14] demonstrate that teachers from these countries often benefit from mutual recognition agreements and streamlined certification processes when migrating to other English-speaking countries. In Australia, specifically, teachers with qualifications from countries other than New Zealand often encounter obstacles in having their credentials recognized and may be required to undergo additional training [64]. However, despite these advantages, challenges remain, particularly in ensuring that these teachers meet local standards and adapt to new educational contexts. Additionally, the absence of a unified national approach to teacher standards and credentials results in differing requirements across Australian states. Being certified in one state does not guarantee employment in another for an immigrant teacher seeking mobility [60].

Teachers trained in non-English speaking settings encounter greater obstacles in getting their qualifications recognized, primarily due to variations in educational systems, language barriers, and the absence of mutual recognition agreements. Generally, immigrant teachers from non-English speaking countries are required to pass English proficiency tests. According to research by Kostogriz & Peeler [42] and Schmidt [62], these educators often face extended certification processes, additional training demands, and sometimes, the need to acquire completely new qualifications in order to teach [47]. Lacking familiarity with the system and the confidence to engage with government departments, many

overseas-qualified teachers found themselves without the necessary cultural capital to advance [64]. Acquiring local qualifications through obtaining another degree to secure teaching positions sometimes can be an effective and “easier” method for gaining local experience and finding employment opportunities [37]. But it is also a time and money consuming choice, especially for those experienced teachers.

Previous literature on the experience of migrant teachers in Australia has primarily addressed their general challenges and adaptation processes. The matter of professional certification and recognition of qualifications in the countries they relocate is a challenge encountered by internationally mobile professionals globally. A thorough research of underlying barriers and potential improvement of this framework in Australia is currently lacking. This research, however, is the first to focus specifically on the mechanisms and frameworks that can enhance flexibility and accessibility for overseas-recognized English teachers aiming to teach in Australia. Additionally, it is the first to investigate the accreditation processes for TESOL teachers qualified in non-English speaking countries, seeking improvements to facilitate their integration into the Australian educational system. Australia can make use of the varied expertise and experiences of foreign educators to improve its educational environment and foster global views in its classrooms by developing an accreditation process that is more inclusive and accessible.

In summary, the reviewed literature sheds light on the complex terrain of Australia's recognition of foreign teaching qualifications, bringing to light both obstacles and prospects. This literature review seeks to illuminate the specific challenges and considerations related to the recognition of overseas-trained English teachers in Australia. By concentrating on the unique aspects of English language teaching and the comparative ease of recognition for teachers from Anglophone countries, this review provides a focused analysis that highlights the critical issues faced by this distinct group of educators. While existing accreditation frameworks aim to uphold norms for professionalism and quality in education, there is considerable room for improvement in terms of openness, uniformity, and alignment across jurisdictions. This may include placing greater value on their teaching experience during the registration process and addressing the bureaucratic and systemic barriers that hinder their inclusion in the teaching profession. Addressing these issues calls for collaborative efforts among regulatory bodies, higher education authorities, and other relevant parties to establish equitable and effective routes for overseas-trained teachers to contribute meaningfully to the Australian education system [28].

3. Research Design/Methodology

This project adopts a constructivist paradigm, which acknowledges that knowledge is socially created and that environment plays a significant role in influencing instructional strategies [66]. This is particularly relevant in exploring how educational policies and practices impact overseas-qualified teachers. The qualitative research approach suggested for this study is compatible with the constructivist viewpoint, enabling a thorough investigation of stakeholders' perspectives and interpretations of the accreditation procedure. With its foundation in constructivism, this research reveals a wide range of viewpoints and provides profound insights into the difficulties associated with Australian teaching certificate validation.

This project aims to investigate how the current accreditation framework in Australia impacts the mobility of overseas-qualified teachers and whether it facilitates or hinders their integration into the education system. To do this, it conducts a comprehensive document analysis of the accreditation guidelines and policies across various Australian states and territories (including regulatory authority guidelines, eligibility requirements, and mutual recognition agreements). This approach enables us to examine the specific barriers, particularly language requirements, that affect these teachers and how the framework supports or limits their professional opportunities in Australian educational contexts. Document analysis is a methodical approach used to review and evaluate documents, including both printed materials and electronic media like computer files and online content [17]. Document analysis makes sense since it makes it possible to thoroughly review policy papers and other literature, and this research investigates various dimensions of the framework, including its specific requirements, the challenges faced by teachers, available support mechanisms, and potential areas for improvement.

The research question addressing the accreditation framework for overseas teacher registration in Australia is primarily concerned with how different regulations and policies are articulated and implemented across various contexts. The research literature on cross-border recognition and international teacher mobility establishes a basis for comprehending the nuances of this problem. Through a careful analysis of the documents, this study aims to uncover how these regulations articulate stakeholders' needs and challenges, thereby expanding on our knowledge of how the accreditation framework affects the registration of foreign teachers. This approach aligns with interpretivist principles by analyzing the implications and contexts embedded within the regulatory texts [21]. The study emphasizes the significance of exploring the socio-cultural dynamics and subjective interpretations that intimately impact the certification process by adopting these paradigms. By applying a constructivist perspective, the study seeks to go beyond superficial observations and explore the underlying presumptions, attitudes, and ideas that influence the framework for recognition and certification in the Australian educational system.

3.1. Data Collection

Documents will be selected based on their relevance to the accreditation and recognition of overseas teaching qualifications. Key documents will include accreditation policies, procedural guidelines, and workforce reports available on official websites. The primary data for this study is collected through an extensive review of documents from several sources:

Regulatory Authorities: Documents and guidelines from various Australian teacher regulatory authorities, including:

Australian Capital Territory - Teacher Quality Institute [70]

New South Wales - NSW Education Standards Authority [48].

Northern Territory - Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory [68].

Queensland - Queensland College of Teachers [57].

South Australia - Teachers Registration Board of South Australia [69].

Tasmania - Teachers Registration Board of Tasmania [72].

Victoria - Victorian Institute of Teaching [75].

Western Australia - Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia [73].

National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR) [29].

To understand the process of recognition of overseas teaching qualifications in Australia, I directly engaged with NOOSR and other related platforms. This involved navigating their official websites and following the provided links to state and territory-specific qualification units. The experience of accessing and interpreting the available information was documented to illustrate the practical challenges and barriers faced by overseas-trained teachers. This approach was chosen to provide firsthand insights into the accessibility and user-friendliness of official recognition systems.

Government Reports and Data: Relevant reports and statistics from the Department of Education and the Australian Bureau of Statistics, focusing on school teacher workforce data and international education data. These documents include policies, regulatory guidelines, accreditation criteria, training requirements, employment statistics, and teacher mobility reports. Policy papers can differ in their clarity, complexity, and applicability, therefore document analysis depends on their availability and quality. The documents were selected to provide comprehensive insights into the accreditation processes and the experiences of overseas-qualified teachers in different Australian states.

3.2. Document Analysis Procedure

Document analysis in this study follows a systematic procedure as outlined by Rapley [58]. The methodology involves several key steps. The initial stage involves the careful location of relevant documents by accessing the official websites of various regulatory authorities responsible for the accreditation of overseas-qualified teachers in different states across Australia. These sources are pivotal in providing the foundational documents that outline the current accreditation standards and requirements. Once the relevant documents are retrieved, a thorough examination of these materials is conducted to extract critical information related to language requirements, qualification recognition bodies, eligibility requirements, and policies on mutual recognition. To make it clearer, I summary and organise all the information into tables. Each piece of information is meticulously categorized under these headings to streamline the subsequent analysis and ensure no significant detail is overlooked. Following categorization, the data extracted from the documents are systematically coded into predefined themes, including 'Language Barriers', 'Eligibility Criteria', and 'Mutual Recognition'. These themes are selected to directly address the research questions posed by the study. The coding process organizes the data into manageable segments that can be more easily analyzed, highlighting the primary barriers faced by overseas-trained teachers, particularly the impact of stringent language requirements. Through this detailed document analysis process, the study aims to uncover the influence language requirements and other accreditation criteria has on the mobility and integration of overseas-trained teachers into the Australian educational system. This methodical approach ensures that the analysis is both comprehensive and aligned with the overarching research objectives.

Rigour will be maintained through methodicalness,

consistency and coherence in policy information collection, interpretation and analysis. Trustworthiness will be ensured by adhering to the principles of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability [44, 65] through audit trails, and provision of rich, thick descriptions that allow for a clear understanding of the context. The main limitation of using document analysis is the potential bias in interpreting documents without the supplementation of empirical data from interviews or surveys that might provide additional insights into personal experiences and perceptions. The dynamic process of developing and implementing policies may lead to frequent updates or modifications, which calls for constant information verification and monitoring. Due to constraints such as the absence of ethical approval, this study is unable to gather firsthand accounts from teachers through interviews or social media posts. Thus, this research does not explore the impact of the accreditation framework from the perspectives of overseas-qualified teachers directly affected by it.

This research aims to provide a foundational understanding of the current accreditation framework's impact on overseas-qualified teachers in Australia. Future research could build upon this groundwork by incorporating empirical data gathered through interviews with affected teachers and policymakers. This would deepen the findings by adding personal narratives and experiences under the existing framework. Additionally, there is an opportunity to conduct comparative research examining the experiences of overseas-trained teachers in different international contexts. Such studies could advocate for the development of an international regulation and recognition framework that facilitates the mobility of overseas-trained teachers. This could potentially alleviate teacher shortages and enhance the global exchange of educational professionals.

This research does not require ethical approval as it involves the analysis of publicly available documents. The study strictly uses publicly available documents, reports, and academic literature and do not involve human participants, ensuring that no confidential or personal data is used without proper authorization. Therefore, no direct interaction with individuals is involved, and no identifiable information will be used in the analysis. All analysis are conducted with respect to the integrity of the information and the institutions involved.

4. Findings & Discussion

The findings of this research shows the complexity of oversea-qualified teachers' being recognised in Australia, especially for those from non-English speaking countries. It calls for the authorities and stakeholders to pay attention to improve and optimise the recognition framework, apart from urging universities to provide more opportunities for Teaching majored students [30].

4.1. Specific Requirements and Barriers

The accreditation framework for overseas-qualified teachers in Australia varies by state and territory. This complexity creates a challenging environment for teachers seeking to have their qualifications recognized and gain employment within the Australian education system [28]. Basically, the recognition and accreditation processes involve various steps and requirements, including residency proofs, validated qualifications from recognized institutions, and adherence to specific visa and citizenship criteria (Table 1). The lack of uniformity and the complex web of rules across states add layers of difficulty for overseas-qualified teachers.

Table 1. Registration Requirements for Overseas-Qualified Teachers by Australian Teacher Regulatory Authorities

State/Territory	Qualification Recognition Body	Eligibility Requirements	Mutual Recognition	Note
Australian Capital Territory	Teacher Quality Institute	<p>Eligibility Verification: Teachers' qualifications must be assessed for comparability to Australian standards using the Australian Education International Country Education Profiles (AEI CEP) or UK NARIC guidelines.</p> <p>Recognition of Institutions: Qualifications must be from institutions listed in the AEI CEP or directories recommended by the CEP. If the country is not covered by CEP, UK NARIC will be referenced to verify the accreditation of the institution.</p> <p>Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Programs: Qualifications must include an initial teacher education program approved for the award of a school teaching qualification. This program must involve supervised school teaching practice, with documented evidence of the number of days or hours completed.</p> <p>Assessment and Approval: Qualifications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and may be reviewed by the Teacher Professional Registration Committee (TPRC). The TPRC will determine if the qualifications meet the necessary higher education</p>	teacher registration in another Australian state or territory, OR New Zealand Practising Certificate	recognition for overseas qualification is mentioned in the linked PDF

State/Territory	Qualification Recognition Body	Eligibility Requirements	Mutual Recognition	Note
		and initial teacher education standards comparable to Australian program structures.		
New South Wales	NSW Education Standards Authority	<p>Availability: Australian citizens, permanent residents, or residents with valid working visas, including working holiday visa;</p> <p>Certified Evidence: certified proof of teaching qualifications;</p> <p>Document Translation: when the transcripts are in a language other than English, provide a translation certified by NAATI alongside the original certified documents;</p> <p>English Proficiency: meet the required English language proficiency levels</p>	Interstate and New Zealand trained teachers	automatically provide web translation service; provide clear navigation for internationally trained teachers on the website
Northern Territory	Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory	<p>completion of a 4-year full-time (or equivalent part-time) initial teacher education course;</p> <p>at least 45 days of supervised practice teaching in a school;</p> <p>English language proficiency;</p> <p>working with children clearance;</p>	teacher registration in another Australian state or territory, OR New Zealand Practising Certificate	no specific content or procedure for overseas-qualified teachers
Queensland	Queensland College of Teachers	<p>Comparability Assessment: Qualifications equivalent to an Australian Bachelor degree level or higher as per the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).</p> <p>Authoritative Resources: A variety of authoritative resources, including advice from the Australian Education International-National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition and the National Information Centre for Australia, are used to assess the comparability of qualifications obtained outside Australia.</p> <p>Legislative Requirements: The Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) is responsible for ensuring that overseas qualifications meet specific legislative requirements for the teaching profession as outlined in sections 8 and 9 of the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005.</p>	registered in another Australian state or territory, OR New Zealand	recognition for overseas qualification is mentioned in the PDF and “specific requirement” is not clear .
South Australia	Teachers Registration Board of South Australia	<p>Primary Path (Option A):</p> <p>i. Possess an approved teacher education degree, diploma, or equivalent. AND</p> <p>ii. Completed a tertiary course in pre-service teacher education for pre-school, primary, or secondary education that:</p> <p>(a). Has a duration of at least 4 years full-time (or part-time equivalent). AND</p> <p>(b). Includes a practical student teaching component conducted at a school or pre-school.</p> <p>Alternative Path (Option B):</p> <p>i. Hold an approved non-teacher education degree, diploma, or equivalent with a duration of at least 3 years full-time (or part-time equivalent). AND</p> <p>ii. Have an approved postgraduate qualification in</p>	Currently Registered as a Teacher in VIC, ACT, WA, NT, TAS, QLD, NSW or NZ	provide clear navigation for internationally trained teachers on the website

State/Territory	Qualification Recognition Body	Eligibility Requirements	Mutual Recognition	Note
		<p>pre-service teacher education for pre-school, primary, or secondary education that:</p> <p>(a). Has a duration of at least 1 year full-time (or part-time equivalent).</p> <p>AND</p> <p>(b). Includes a practical student teaching component conducted at a school or pre-school.</p> <p>Additional Requirement: The practical student teaching component must last at least 45 days.</p>		
Tasmania	Teachers Registration Board of Tasmania	<p>Qualification Requirements: Hold an accredited initial teacher education (ITE) degree or an equivalent qualification. This can include qualifications previously accredited or comparable qualifications from overseas.</p> <p>Professional Experience: The ITE program should include a substantial period of supervised and assessed teaching practice in a recognized school environment.</p> <p>Academic Requirements: The qualification must be awarded by a higher education institution and represent at least four years of full-time tertiary study.</p> <p>(Qualifications obtained outside Australia must be formally assessed by the Board to ensure they match Australian accredited ITE programs and meet English language proficiency requirements.)</p>	<p>registered in another Australian state or territory, OR New Zealand</p> <p>(with certain restrictions on some categories of teachers registered in VIT & NESAS)</p>	provide clear navigation for internationally trained teachers on the website
Victoria	Victorian Institute of Teaching	<p>Documentation Requirements: Evidence of their qualifications for assessment by the VIT to ensure they are equivalent to an approved initial teacher education (ITE) or early childhood teacher (ECT) program.</p> <p>Including: an academic transcript, evidence of qualification completion (e.g., testamur), and evidence of supervised teaching practice.</p> <p>Supervised Teaching Practice: Must be detailed in an official letter from the university.</p> <p>The letter must confirm: A minimum of 45 days of supervised teaching practice. The educational setting (primary or secondary school, early childhood service) where the practice was conducted. Teaching activities conducted only within the university environment with peers and staff, or any unsupervised or unqualified teaching, will not be accepted. The age range of students taught.</p> <p>Focus of Qualifications: Teaching qualifications must specifically target early childhood, primary, and/or secondary education sectors.</p>	hold current teacher registration in another Australian state or territory or in New Zealand	provide clear navigation for internationally trained teachers on the website
Western Australia	Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia	<p>Qualification Standards: Hold a teaching qualification from an accredited initial teacher education (ITE) program, or have a qualification recognized by the TRBWA as equivalent.</p> <p>Assessment of Overseas Qualifications: The TRBWA</p>	currently hold teacher registration in any other Australian State or Territory or New Zealand	clear navigation on the website

State/Territory	Qualification Recognition Body	Eligibility Requirements	Mutual Recognition	Note
		<p>will evaluate whether an overseas qualification matches an accredited ITE program.</p> <p>Criteria for Equivalence: The qualification must: Be at the Bachelor degree level or higher. Comprise at least four years of higher education (full-time or part-time equivalent). Include at least one year of professional teacher education content (full-time or part-time equivalent). Include a minimum of 45 days of satisfactory supervised teaching practice in primary, secondary, or early childhood education settings.</p>		

Note: Information compiled and summarised from the official websites of the Teacher Quality Institute (ACT), NSW Education Standards Authority, Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory, Queensland College of Teachers, Teachers Registration Board of South Australia, Teachers Registration Board of Tasmania, Victorian Institute of Teaching, and Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia.

Across all Australian states, the registration process for overseas-qualified teachers involves comprehensive assessments to ensure qualifications are comparable to Australian standards. These assessments typically utilize tools like the Australian Education International Country Education Profiles (AEI CEP) or UK NARIC guidelines. Consistently, states require documented professional experience involving supervised teaching and universally mandate English language proficiency to ensure teachers can effectively communicate within educational settings. There is also a uniform requirement for specific documentation such as academic transcripts, qualification completion proofs, and evidence of at least 45 days of supervised teaching practice.

Collins & Reid [20] argue that frequently these recognition procedures fall short of the expectations or promises made to the immigration professionals themselves, or do not proceed as easily as they should. These requirements in fact pose the differences in different education systems. It is this complexity that makes it almost impossible to generate a universal set of rules for teacher qualification recognition. In Australia, the pathway to becoming a registered teacher and securing a teaching position involves completing a Bachelor of Education, a four-year program offered at most universities, or a Master of Teaching for graduates from other disciplines, typically taking between 1.5 to 2 years. A key component of these programs is the requirement for practical teaching experience, involving at least 45 days of supervised classroom teaching. Additionally, the Australian system specifies the qualifications needed based on the school level—primary or secondary—where teachers' training aligns closely with the educational level they intend to teach. Schools generally prefer to employ teachers who are specifically trained for the targeted level.

China's approach to teacher registration, for example, combines specialized coursework and supervised teaching practice, which usually extends over three months. Students may choose to undertake their teaching practice at any school, though many opt for partner schools associated with their university. Beyond the practical experience, aspiring teachers must pass a comprehensive Teacher Qualification Certificate Examination, which includes both written tests and interviews. This exam is categorized by teaching level

(primary, junior high, or senior high) and the candidate's major (e.g., mathematics, chemistry, English). Significantly, the certification obtained can influence employment opportunities: individuals certified to teach at the senior high school level are eligible to teach their specialized subject at all school levels, whereas those with a junior high school certificate can teach at both junior high and primary levels.

This contrast highlights the adaptability required in regulatory frameworks to accommodate the distinct teacher training systems of different countries. Australia's system is highly structured, with clear delineations between primary and secondary education training, directly influencing employment prospects. Meanwhile, China's system offers a broader certification process that permits a wider range of teaching opportunities based on the level of certification achieved. It would be ideal if educational boards and authorities should recognize these inherent differences and consider more flexible, context-specific approaches when evaluating and recognizing international teaching qualifications.

Another significant challenge in the registration process is the inconsistency in the accessibility of information. Not all regulatory bodies provide clear or easily accessible information on their websites regarding requirements for overseas-trained teachers. Occasionally, necessary details are buried in PDF documents or not available at all, complicating the application process. Moreover, the lack of transparent self-assessment tools means that the criteria for formal qualification assessments by educational boards are not always clear. This opacity prevents applicants from self-assessing their qualifications effectively, potentially deterring well-qualified candidates from applying.

A consistent theme in the registration requirements for overseas-qualified teachers across various Australian states and territories is the presence of language requirements. Language waivers are predominantly granted to individuals who have completed their educational qualifications in specific English-speaking countries. This list generally includes Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and the Republic of Ireland.

Table 2. English Language Proficiency (ELP) Requirements for Overseas-Qualified Teachers in Australia

State/Territory	Language Waiver	Potential Exemption (submit a request if eligible for accreditation)	Academic International English Language Testing System (IELTS)-Results obtained within the last two years	International Second Language Proficiency Rating (ISLPR)-Results obtained within the last two years
Australian Capital Territory	completed all teaching qualification/s (four or more years) in English in: Australia; New Zealand; the UK; the Republic of Ireland; the USA; Canada		at least band 8 in Speaking and Listening; at least band 7 in Reading and Writing;	scores of level 4 in all four areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing
New South Wales	completed all the qualifications in 1 or more of the following countries: Australia; United Kingdom; Republic of Ireland; United States; New Zealand; Canada	meeting at least two of the following criteria: a. Teaching experience in English; b. Employment in a job other than teaching requiring effective English communication; c. Completion of all secondary schooling in an English-speaking country; d(i). Teacher registration in an English-speaking country where English proficiency was required OR d(ii). Successful completion of tertiary study in an English-speaking country	a minimum score of: 7 in reading and writing 8 in speaking and listening (NESA recognises the IELTS One-Skill Retake)	scores of level 4 in all 4 skill areas: listening; speaking; reading; writing
Northern Territory	qualified in English in: Australia; Ireland; New Zealand; The United Kingdom; English-speaking Canada; the United States of America		at least band 8 in Speaking and Listening; at least band 7 in Reading and Writing; an overall band score of 7.5 across all four parts of the test (Speaking, Reading, Listening and Writing)	scores of level 4 in all four areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing
Queensland	completed the full four years of higher education study required for registration in English in: Australia; New Zealand; United Kingdom; United States of America; Canada;		at least band 8 in Speaking and Listening; at least band 7 in Reading and Writing; an average band score of 7.5 across all four skill areas of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing	at least 4 in each of the skill areas of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing

State/Territory	Language Waiver	Potential Exemption (submit a request if eligible for accreditation)	Academic International English Language Testing System (IELTS)-Results obtained within the last two years	International Second Language Proficiency Rating (ISLPR)-Results obtained within the last two years
	Republic of Ireland			
South Australia	completed the full four years of higher education study required for registration in English in: Australia; New Zealand; United Kingdom; United States of America; Canada; Republic of Ireland		a minimum score of: 7 in reading and writing 8 in speaking and listening (SA recognises the IELTS One-Skill Retake)	at least 4 in each of the skill areas of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing
Tasmania	completed four or more years of higher education in any of these locations: Australia; New Zealand; Republic of Ireland; Canada (if tertiary studies were completed in English); United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales); United States of America		at least band 8 in Speaking and Listening; at least band 7 in Reading and Writing; an average band score of 7.5 across all four skill areas of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing	at least 4 in each of the skill areas of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing
Victoria	teacher education qualifications, consisting of four full years of higher education study that includes an approved initial teacher education program (or qualifications assessed as comparable), were undertaken in English in: Australia; New Zealand; the United Kingdom; United States of America; Canada; the Republic of Ireland		a minimum score of: 7 in reading and writing 8 in speaking and listening (VIT recognises the IELTS One-Skill Retake)	at least 4 in each of the skill areas of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing
Western Australia	all of the components of a teaching qualification are undertaken in the English language in one or more of the following countries: Australia; New Zealand; the United Kingdom; the United States of America; Canada; the Republic of Ireland.		at least band 8 in Speaking and Listening; at least band 7 in Reading and Writing; an average band score of 7.5 across all four skill areas of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing	no description

Note: Information compiled and summarised from the official websites of the Teacher Quality Institute (ACT), NSW Education Standards Authority, Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory, Queensland College of Teachers, Teachers Registration Board of South Australia, Teachers Registration Board of Tasmania, Victorian Institute of Teaching, and Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia.

The language requirement serves as a significant barrier for teachers qualified in non-english speaking countries. In the

fiscal year 2022-23, the leading five birth countries contributing to net overseas migration were India, China, the Philippines, the United Kingdom, and Australia (Australian-born individuals returning to Australia, approximately 50,000 arrivals each year). A decade-long analysis shows consistent growth in migration from India and China before the pandemic, and with the easing of travel restrictions after COVID-19 outbreak, the 2022-23 period saw increases in net migration from India, China, the Philippines, and the United Kingdom, surpassing pre-pandemic figures [1].

The current practice of waiving language requirements (Table 2) for teachers from major Anglophone countries, while ostensibly streamlining the accreditation process, does not necessarily correlate with teaching efficacy in diverse classroom environments. The rigid language testing framework, often symbolized by required scores (such as IELTS 7 for reading and writing and 8 for speaking and listening), may inadvertently exclude potentially skilled teachers who could contribute positively to the educational landscape but who do not meet these specific benchmarks. Empirical experience in ITE programs does not guarantee proficiency in the educational language skills required in Australian classrooms. Furthermore, successfully passing a language proficiency test does not ensure that an individual has mastered the specific language skills needed for effective teaching. This dichotomy highlights a fundamental flaw in the assumption that high test scores directly translate to effective communication and instruction in an educational setting.

Another significant assumption underlying the language waiver policies is that completing a four-year education in an English-speaking country sufficiently ensures language proficiency. However, this assumption may not universally hold true. While education in an English-speaking country is often used as a benchmark for language proficiency, this criterion does not account for the actual language skills used and developed during the course of study. For instance, students who complete their education in English-speaking environments might not necessarily achieve the language proficiency required for teaching effectively in Australian schools. Factors such as the nature of the educational program, the extent of engagement in English outside the academic environment, and individual language acquisition abilities vary greatly. Therefore, relying solely on the country of education might overlook significant variations in language competence among graduates, potentially affecting their effectiveness as educators.

This not only limits the pool of available teachers but also fails to consider the broader linguistic competencies essential for classroom teaching. The necessity for overseas-trained teachers to prove their English proficiency through standardized tests presents a substantial hurdle. These tests require high proficiency levels to guarantee that teachers can handle professional communications in classrooms effectively. Such high standards pose a challenge for non-native English speakers, particularly those with limited English exposure. Apart from that, the costs associated with preparing for and taking these tests are significant. These costs include not only the test fees but also the expenses for preparatory courses and materials, which can be prohibitively expensive for individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds or from countries with weaker currencies. Stringent language requirements may unintentionally limit the cultural and linguistic diversity within Australia's educational system. These high standards could exclude

capable educators who may not fully meet the language criteria but possess valuable teaching skills and insights. This exclusion not only affects the educators who are denied opportunities but also diminishes the educational system's ability to reflect and cater to the multicultural and multilingual nature of Australian society. Reconsidering these language standards could foster a more inclusive and diverse educational workforce, benefiting both educators and students alike. Furthermore, the stress and pressure to pass these tests to secure employment can negatively impact performance, potentially leading to repeated attempts that amplify both financial costs and personal discouragement. These obstacles highlight how English proficiency tests, while intended to ensure effective communication in the classroom, can inadvertently dissuade skilled educators and limit the diversity of teaching talents in Australian schools.

4.2. Support Mechanisms and Resources

In their research, Collins and Reid [20] asked immigrant teachers about one major change they would like to see in education policies or procedures. The most common suggestion, mentioned by about one in five respondents, was to simplify the administrative and institutional pathways that new immigrant teachers must navigate to be allowed to teach in Australian schools. Regarding the difficulties faced as an immigrant teacher in Australia, the most frequent response, was struggling with the bureaucratic systems and processes in Australian schools. Globally, several programs have been established by prominent institutions such as UNESCO, the OECD, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and the Commonwealth Secretariat to oversee and regulate the international mobility, migration, and employment of teachers [55]. But regarding the specific and nuanced difficulties in the process, applicants do need more indigenised and specialised supports.

According to Deer et al. [24], a national body effectively acts as a quasi-national registration system by recognizing overseas teaching qualifications through the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR). However, my visit to the NOOSR website [29] revealed that it serves as a general qualification recognition platform, providing links to various "State and Territory Government Overseas Qualifications Units." These units do not specifically target teaching qualifications. To determine how the process works for overseas teaching qualifications, I examined each link. In summary, NOOSR primarily focuses on the recognition of academic qualifications rather than exclusively addressing teaching qualifications. I then found the following statement: <Note that Australia's National Information Centre in the Department of Education... including 'AEI-NOOSR', 'NOOSR'... no longer use these names...For more information ... 'Who can assess my qualification?'> Upon clicking the link, I was finally directed to information of Australian teacher regulatory authorities mentioned above. While mechanisms for the recognition of overseas qualifications exist, accessing specific and useful information for internationally trained teachers remains challenging and not readily accessible. The information is fragmented and requires navigating multiple layers of bureaucracy, which can be daunting and inefficient for individuals seeking to validate their qualifications and enter the teaching profession in Australia.

Tools like the Country Education Profiles (CEPs) mentioned in Table 1 are designed to help organizations

understand overseas qualifications, their practical utility for individual applicants is limited. The CEPs are more geared toward institutions than individuals, offering little direct assistance to applicants trying to navigate the complex recognition process on their own. Regarding the Australian Country Education Profile (CEP for Australia) published by the Department of Education [28], it provides a comprehensive overview of the Australian education system, detailing the range from preschool to tertiary education, including vocational and higher education pathways. This detailed structuring is essential for assessing overseas qualifications as it establishes benchmarks for comparison. CEPs facilitate the assessment of whether an overseas qualification corresponds to an Australian qualification at a similar level, such as comparing a foreign Bachelor's degree with its Australian counterpart. This comparison considers factors like the duration of study and the nature of the institution to ensure equivalence. This situation also happens in the field of pharmacists, foreign credential assessment agencies that perform evaluations for immigration purposes often lack the resources to conduct in-depth assessments, relying instead on general comparisons of professional regulations between the host country and the country of origin [53]. Relying on basic comparisons of professional standards and regulations between the target and the former country, rather than detailed, in-depth assessments may not fully reflect the equivalency and applicability of the qualifications. Even if the qualification can be comprehensibly assessed with endeavor, there is a noted lack of transparency and accessibility for individual applicants, particularly overseas-trained teachers who need to understand how their qualifications will be evaluated. The detailed criteria used in these assessments are often not fully accessible, leading to uncertainties about eligibility and specific requirements. Furthermore, the CEP for Australia are primarily designed for use by institutions and professional bodies, not individual teachers, which limits their direct utility for those trying to navigate the qualification recognition process on their own.

One notable initiative to support the integration of overseas-trained teachers into Australian schools is a bridging course offered by the University of Sydney. Funded by the Sydney Institute for Community Languages Education (SICLE), this course is designed to fast-track the accreditation of teachers with migrant and refugee backgrounds who have significant teaching experience abroad but face challenges in having their qualifications recognized in Australia. As reported by Cruickshank [22], this program is unique and serves as the only course of its kind globally tailored specifically for overseas-trained teachers. It addresses a critical gap in the educational system by providing these educators with a streamlined pathway to accreditation. Approximately 2,000 professionals with overseas qualifications are targeted by this program, with 60 having already commenced Master of Teaching upgrade programs in 2021, which are essential for their integration into local schools.

4.3. Current Situation of Overseas-qualified Teachers and Potential Improvements

The composition of the teaching workforce in Australia shows a marked underrepresentation of individuals born overseas compared to the general working-age population. The discrepancy is evident across states: in New South Wales, 30% of the working-age population was born overseas, versus

15% of the teaching workforce; in South Australia, these figures were 25% and 17%. Interestingly, the Northern Territory stands out with a higher percentage of overseas-born teachers (27%) compared to its overall overseas-born population (23%) [5].

Within the past decade, 5% of completions from Australian Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs were by international students [5]. In 2023, 20% of the teacher workforce in Australia were born overseas, with 6% holding overseas ITE qualifications (AITSL, 2023). This suggests a noteworthy retention of these individuals within the Australian teaching workforce. However, it should be noted that these ITE programs generally require at least two years of study, such as four-year undergraduate degrees or two-year postgraduate degrees, and this often encompasses teachers initially qualified overseas who undertake further education in Australia just to meet local teaching standards.

Australia ranks as the fourth largest destination globally for international students, and the increase in the number of foreign students in Australia has been one of the fastest among OECD countries [19]. In 2023, a total of 3,754 Chinese students commenced their studies in higher education and Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs in Australia, with 1,281 of them enrolling in Graduate Diploma programs, as reported by the Department of Education [31, 32]. These programs, classified as level 8 on the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), are typically completed within 1-2 years, reflecting a strong preference for shorter, more expedient educational pathways. This trend is also observed between 2010 and 2013, when this kind of program suddenly become popular among Australian teachers and leaders [27]. Additionally, by 2013, a notable shift occurred with 31.8% of primary teachers and 52.6% of secondary teachers holding Bachelor or Bachelor (Honours) degrees in non-education fields.

The issues identified in the Australian context resonate with global trends observed in the literature. Research indicates that complex recognition processes and inconsistent policies are common challenges in many countries, often leading to similar outcomes of reduced mobility and underutilization of skilled professionals [52, 74]. The need for streamlined, transparent, and supportive frameworks is a recurring theme, emphasizing the importance of a cohesive approach to qualification recognition [13].

According to a recent analysis by a US-based international think-tank [54], the core of international competitiveness is talent, or human capital. The degree to which governments customize a comprehensive immigration package for prospective immigrants affects how attractive a country is to migrants. As the global competition for highly-skilled talent intensifies among both origin and destination countries, policymakers will need to skillfully design immigration systems that enhance their countries' appeal [54]. In this context, it is crucial to improve the recognition framework for overseas-trained teachers. By clarifying the accreditation process and ensuring that foreign qualifications are accurately assessed and valued, Australia can save time and quickly secure the workforce they need without waiting an additional 1-2 years for another degree or diploma.

One practical way to improve the recognition process would be to enhance its effectiveness by tailoring guidance and support specifically for overseas-trained teachers. Regulatory authorities could enhance the accessibility of information by creating dedicated sections for overseas-

trained teachers on their websites with step-by-step guides, illustrative examples that show how different foreign qualifications align with Australian standards, FAQs that address common concerns and requirements, and even interactive online tools for preliminary assessments. Workshops and online training sessions about the Australian educational system and its qualification assessment procedures could also demystify the application process for overseas-qualified teachers. Apart from that, Australia could also benefit from establishing a common standard for recognizing teaching qualifications across states and territories drawing on the success of the United Kingdom's Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) program. A major objection to international and inter-regional recognition agreements stems from concerns about the variability of foreign standards, the absence of established quality assurance mechanisms, and the misalignment between quality assurance and recognition procedures [39, 67, 77]. The QTS model has unified teacher registration and accreditation standards across the nation [26], thereby facilitates the mobility of educators across regions and enhances international collaboration within the education sector.

In the realm recognizing overseas-qualified teachers, there is a pressing need for specific and detailed requirements that are sensitive to the diverse educational backgrounds inherent to teachers from different countries. This need for specificity and detail can be paralleled with the stringent recognition processes employed by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) for internationally qualified nurses and midwives (IQNMs). The NMBA uses three criteria to assess qualifications: whether they are substantially equivalent to an NMBA-approved qualification, relevant, or neither. This model also demonstrates flexibility by allowing some less-recognized qualifications to be registered with conditions [50], therefore accommodating a range of competencies while ensuring that all practitioners meet a baseline level of proficiency. Applying a similar approach to teacher accreditation would enhance the recognition process. By using country-specific criteria and allowing conditional registrations, Australia could better integrate international teachers while maintaining high standards and ensure that the diverse skills of overseas-trained teachers are properly valued.

Australia has the opportunity to apply a more holistic approach to assessing ELP by learning from both national and international examples. In New South Wales, the current framework for exemptions in language proficiency requirements offers a practical model that could inspire similar policies in other Australian states and territories. This model includes a range of criteria such as teaching experience in English, employment in roles that require effective English communication, completion of secondary schooling or tertiary education in English-speaking countries, and teacher registration in countries where English proficiency is mandated. Recognizing these diverse indicators of language proficiency acknowledges that practical and professional experiences can also demonstrate an individual's ability to effectively communicate in English, not just standardized tests. Building on the NSW approach, enhancing language requirement policies across Australia could include broadening the recognition of professional experiences that involve English proficiency, thereby valuing practical language skills demonstrated in various professional contexts.

Introducing more flexible criteria for demonstrating language proficiency could help accommodate the varied

nature of language use in educational and professional environments. The United Kingdom, with its inclusion of multiple approved language proficiency tests (IELTS SELT Consortium; LanguageCert; Pearson; PSI Services; Trinity College London) for achieving Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), offers a model for diversifying assessment methods [25]. Currently, the Teaching Regulation Authority (TRA) recognizes five approved Secure English Language Test (SELT) providers, offering more flexibility in terms of pricing and locations. Simultaneously, Canada utilizes the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) to assess language proficiency [56, 51]. These frameworks allow candidates to demonstrate their English or French language skills across a broader spectrum of competencies. By combining the flexibility in language ability acceptance and detailed language assessment criteria, Australia can improve the accessibility and fairness of its accreditation process for overseas-qualified teachers.

Due to differences in education systems worldwide, it is understandable that many teaching qualifications cannot be recognized in Australia. The bridging course developed by the University of Sydney, funded by the Sydney Institute for Community Languages Education (SICLE), serves as a pioneering model of how targeted educational programs can facilitate the smoother integration of internationally trained teachers into the Australian school system. By offering a structured yet flexible curriculum tailored to the specific needs of migrant and refugee teachers, this course addresses directly the challenges of accreditation and professional integration faced by these educators. This bridging program should not remain an isolated initiative. There is a compelling case for adopting this model nationally across all states and territories in Australia. By doing so, the educational authorities can significantly reduce the skill wastage that is currently prevalent and harness the full potential of internationally trained educators. Promoting this course nationally would require collaboration among state education departments, universities, and professional teacher associations to ensure that the curriculum and support services are adapted appropriately for different regional contexts. Implementing such a program on a national scale could serve as a transformative step towards optimizing the integration of international talent into Australia's education system, providing a replicable model of inclusion and diversity in professional recognition practices.

One of the significant aspects of this study is the exploration of the career pathways for TESOL teachers in Australia. Traditionally, TESOL educators, even those with comprehensive qualifications and robust teaching experience, face distinct challenges in securing positions within mainstream schools. This difficulty largely stems from the stringent and often convoluted accreditation processes that do not uniformly recognize international qualifications and teaching experience. A typical pathway for many TESOL graduates involves initially finding employment in sectors other than the mainstream educational system. For instance, many end up in ELICOS centers. These institutions provide language bridging programs which, while crucial, may not fully utilize the broader pedagogical skills of TESOL educators. These positions are essential but often seen as stepping stones rather than as part of a long-term career trajectory in education. For TESOL teachers aiming to transition into the mainstream school system, the pathway

often involves undertaking additional qualifications, such as a teaching degree recognized by local educational authorities. This requirement signifies a substantial investment in time and resources, which can be a deterrent for many skilled educators who already possess equivalent qualifications from their countries of origin. Once these additional credentials are obtained, TESOL teachers can finally apply their specialized methods and skills in a mainstream school setting, thereby achieving their professional goals in a somewhat roundabout and protracted manner. This circuitous route not only impacts the professional lives of TESOL educators but also affects the diversity and richness of educational experiences available to students. There is a clear need for policy reforms that streamline accreditation processes and recognize the qualifications of international TESOL educators more readily.

These improvements would not only facilitate a smoother integration of international teachers and diverse teaching methods into the Australian educational system but also enrich the educational landscape with varied linguistic and cultural perspectives, ultimately benefiting the educational community at large.

5. Conclusion

The current accreditation framework in Australia significantly affects the mobility and integration of overseas-qualified teachers, often hindering their entry into the educational system. While the framework facilitates a relatively straightforward process for teachers from New Zealand through mutual recognition, this ease does not extend universally. Despite the lack of automatic mutual recognition [10], New Zealand qualified teachers still benefit from a simpler recognition process due to established agreements and proximity. For teachers from major Anglophone countries such as the USA, UK, Canada, and Ireland, the pathway to accreditation is less cumbersome. These teachers are typically exempt from stringent language requirements due to the native status of English and the alignment of their educational qualifications with Australian standards. This congruence in teaching programs across these countries simplifies the process of preparing and submitting the necessary documentation for accreditation. However, the situation is markedly different for a significant portion of potential teachers migrating from Asia, which represents 57% of international students in Australia [30], with China forming the largest group. Teachers from these regions often face rigorous challenges in the accreditation process, primarily due to language barriers and the distinct differences in educational systems. This discrepancy in the recognition process underscores an inherent bias within the framework, favoring those from English-speaking backgrounds and similar educational structures.

To foster a more inclusive and effective educational workforce, it is imperative to reassess and potentially reform the current accreditation framework. Enhancing the recognition process for teachers from non-Anglophone countries and diversifying the understanding of different educational qualifications could alleviate these challenges. Such improvements would not only aid in addressing the teacher shortage in Australia but also enrich the educational environment with diverse perspectives and teaching methodologies. This research has thoroughly explored the impact of Australia's current accreditation framework on the mobility of overseas-qualified teachers, addressing several critical aspects: the specific requirements and processes for

recognition and accreditation, the primary barriers and challenges faced, available support mechanisms, the current situation of overseas-qualified teachers under this framework, and potential improvements to better support their integration.

The investigation reveals that the recognition and accreditation process for overseas-qualified teachers in Australia involves a series of detailed steps, including proof of residency, validation of qualifications from recognized institutions, and adherence to specific visa and citizenship criteria. Across all states, a uniform requirement is evident, demanding comprehensive assessments to align overseas qualifications with Australian standards, documented professional experience, and English language proficiency. However, the lack of uniformity and clarity across different states creates significant hurdles. Information on regulatory requirements is often scattered or obscure, complicating the application process for potential candidates. The absence of transparent self-assessment tools prevents applicants from effectively evaluating their qualifications against formal criteria, which could discourage well-qualified individuals from pursuing these opportunities. The stringent language requirements poses a significant barrier for teachers from non-English speaking countries. The current frameworks do not sufficiently accommodate the diverse educational backgrounds of teachers from various international regions. The information and support provided are not adequately tailored to address the unique needs of overseas-trained teachers, leading to potential underutilization of international educational resources and expertise. The University of Sydney's bridging program is a notable initiative that aids in the smoother integration of overseas-trained teachers into the Australian school system, but such programs are scarce and not universally accessible.

The research identifies several key improvements that could significantly enhance the framework's effectiveness for accrediting overseas-trained teachers in Australia. Firstly, tailoring guidance and support is crucial. Clearer and more specific guidance aimed at overseas-trained teachers could simplify the accreditation process, making it more transparent and accessible. This improvement could include the provision of step-by-step guides, illustrative examples, and readily accessible information on regulatory websites, which would help demystify the steps involved in gaining accreditation. Secondly, enhancing language assessment approaches is essential. By learning from both national and international examples—such as the flexible language proficiency models used in New South Wales and the United Kingdom—Australia could adopt more inclusive language assessment standards. This would involve diversifying the range of accepted language proficiency tests and refining the criteria for language assessment to ensure they more accurately reflect the practical language skills needed in educational settings. Lastly, expanding bridging programs would provide substantial benefits. Increasing the availability and scope of programs like those offered by the University of Sydney would greatly assist in the recognition and integration of more overseas-trained teachers into the Australian education system [28]. Such programs provide essential support by bridging the gap between different educational standards and helping teachers meet Australian requirements more effectively.

In conclusion, while Australia's current framework for the accreditation of overseas-qualified teachers is comprehensive, it requires refinement to reduce barriers and enhance support

for these educators. Given Australia's current teacher shortage, it is a good choice for Australian government to optimise the recognition framework for overseas-qualified teachers. By addressing the specific needs of overseas-trained teachers through tailored support and more adaptable language proficiency requirements, and by expanding effective integration programs, Australia can better harness the global teaching resources at its disposal. This approach not only aids in filling the current teacher shortage but also enriches the Australian educational landscape with diverse perspectives and practices. Thus, the proposed improvements not only address the immediate practicalities of accreditation but also align with broader educational and societal benefits, fostering a more inclusive and dynamic educational environment.

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