

Emigration's changing face

Irish people's attitude to emigration varies according to their age. Many young people see it not as a curse but an opportunity, but in future, the trick will be to persuade them to return, writes Gareth Naughton

Next weekend, 35 Canadian companies will pitch their tents in Dublin's RDS in the hope of attracting 1,000 workers to fill vacant positions across the Atlantic.

The expo will probably not attract the mammoth crowds that flooded the RDS two years ago as the realities of the Irish economic situation were biting home, but emigration has been consistently rising since the crash and it is safe to say that the Canadians will not be stuck for applicants.

Applicants' motivations have changed significantly in the ten years that WorkingAbroad has been staging expos here, and there has been a noticeable increase in Irish nationals attending in the last two years, according to Stephen McLarnon, chief executive of the WorkingAbroad Newcomers Network.

Changing trends

"The very first wave of people to go to the show in 2008 and 2009 were secondary migrants – foreign nationals who were living in Ireland. They are probably the best barometer of any economy," said McLarnon.

"When the economy begins to slow they are the first to lose their jobs or sense what is going on in the market. As we moved into 2010/11 we started to see the proportion of Irish people increase and overtake foreign nationals.

"The last two years, it has been predominantly Irish people, and when you talk to them they are people who held back. They used their savings, they weren't sure where things were going and ultimately they cannot hold on any longer."

Reluctant emigrants

The reluctant emigrant has been a feature of Irish society since the crash and remains so with taxes increasing and public spending tightening all the time. Should the decision to leave be seen as a disaster or a smart decision driven by

pragmatism?

The figures are quite stark. The Central Statistics Office will release the next round of migration statistics in April, but last year's figures were no joke, showing that 89,000 people had emigrated. This was countered, of course, by the 55,900 people who either moved to, or returned to Ireland.

However, there was a marked increase in the percentage of Irish nationals who left. Emigration is happening and the vast majority of those who are leaving are in their 20s and 30s.

Viewed through the prism of the permanent migration of the 1950s – when men left their homesteads to go to Britain and either never returned or only did so sporadically – those figures are a disaster. But emigration is a much more nuanced experience now.

While the economic malaise has underpinned the decisions of many who have left, their reasons for going and their experience of leaving are many and varied.

Youth impact

When Marie-Claire McAleer, senior research and policy officer for the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), carried out qualitative research in the experience and impact of emigration on Ireland's youth the results were not clear cut.

"It found a very mixed picture with positives and negatives. There were two key things in terms of the reasons why they were leaving," said McAleer.

"Obviously, the predetermining factor was the economic situation at home and limited opportunities, but there were also others leaving because they wanted to experience new horizons.

"There were greater opportunities open to them and they would take them while they were young. Some were more positively disposed to emigration than others.

"Some had better experiences abroad, some experienced challenges like homesickness and trouble readjusting. It is so complex that really a journey would be the best way to describe it."



Marie-Claire McAleer, senior research and policy officer, National Youth Council of Ireland: reactions to emigration differ greatly between the generations

More interesting, however, was that when they were asked what their five-year plan was, most said they would be coming home, provided Ireland had enough jobs and more sustainable public policies in place.

When asked how they perceived their experience compared to previous generations, the participants said that, in many ways, they had it easier. Whether they had moved for better career prospects or a better lifestyle, they all reported a positive experience.

It is the emotional side of emigration that really colours our thinking, according to McAleer.

"Emigration is not a new phenomenon and people have said it is part of the Irish psyche, but there has definitely been a shift in perception – it has changed," she said.

"We cannot take return migration as a given. We cannot be complacent about it – competition has become much fiercer"

"When I interviewed the young people who had left, they viewed it as an opportunity for the most part, given the economic situation in Ireland, but the reaction of their parents and older siblings was quite different.

"They felt that the older generation saw it as permanent, a one-way ticket, whereas they never saw it in that way. They all spoke about wishing to return in the future."

Generational attitudes

For McLarnon, attitudes towards emigration come down to generation.

"Once you get over 50 years of age, emigration is a scar. In your 40s, you are not so bad about it because you may have done it yourself already," he said.

"In your 30s, most people have done a J1. It is an Irish thing, it always will be and it is what makes this country brilliant because people with get up and go get fantastic experience. Some come home, some don't, some move on.

"Markets ebb and flow and emigration ebbs and flows. In two or three years' time Ireland is going to have a critical skills shortage in a number of trade sectors when construction kicks off again and you will find people coming back. "Ten years ago, F&S and the construction industry were going to Newfoundland in Canada to recruit people to come to work in Ireland. It is cyclical," he said.

Teleworking trend

The world is becoming a smaller place, said McLarnon,



Aine McCarthy from Castleknock: has found that in Canada there are 'fantastic opportunities to improve your career'

and advances in technology mean that teleworking will be a feature of working life for many, changing the very concept of emigration.

"People will have very specific skills, transferable across different organisations, and companies won't be hiring people on a full-time basis, they will instead go out and look for a person to do a specific job wherever they are in the world and they will do it in the office or remotely. It will become about assignment work," he said.

This globalised workforce will present real difficulties for the Irish economy, however. The long-term permanent migration of a large number of young people is not sustainable – it will come back to haunt us in the end – and NYCI believes that the government should eventually make efforts to incentivise emigrants to come back.

"We cannot take return migration as a given. We cannot be complacent about

it – competition has become much fiercer internationally for particular skill-sets," said McAleer.

"We need to be engaging with people who have left and we need to try to incentivise them to return when there are jobs in the Irish labour market for them to return to and if they want to return, of course."

WorkingAbroad.net's Canada Expo takes place in Dublin's RDS on March 22 and 23 and at the Silver Springs Hotel in Cork on March 26. Tickets cost €10.

"You'd have to be crazy not to find work" Castleknock woman Aine McCarthy is among those Irish people who have found new opportunities in Canada. McCarthy (26) left her job in a sustainable energy consultancy in Dublin to move to Calgary in Alberta.

She was motivated to make the move by a desire to live abroad but also the opportunity for professional advancement.

"There was a real skills shortage in Calgary. I had never been here and didn't know anybody here so I had no ties whatsoever, but it just seemed like the smarter choice, even if it was going to be challenging to begin with," said McCarthy.

"For me, it really paid off. There is lots of work here and I have been able to work in the same area that I had been working in Dublin but learn a new industry and keep growing."

McCarthy emigrated with her boyfriend on a two-year work permit open to people up to the age of 35, and now works for Canadian oil company Cenovus.

She is one example of why it is not necessarily just people with trade or construction skills who are in demand.

"I find they really rate your education and professional qualifications here, so there are fantastic opportunities to improve your career. These career opportunities also offer a great lifestyle. We'd never have been able to afford to buy a home in Ireland, but we can see it's easier to build a future here," she said.

Average salaries in Canada are higher than in Ireland, but in Calgary, which is in the midst of an oil and gas boom, they are higher still, and McCarthy said that finding work, no matter what the field, is not difficult.

"I have met quite a few Irish people who have moved over in the last year and I do not know anyone who has not found work. You would have to be crazy not to find work," she said.

Within months, O'Farrell realised that the new principal was not required to sit all day in a classroom monitoring the teacher, so she wrote that she would like to return to her job if this round-the-clock monitoring was no longer a condition of the post.

The parish priest did not respond to the letter and later said that he just wanted to make a fresh start and avoid getting involved with previous issues.

The Employment Appeals Tribunal found that the parish priest, as the single manager of the Catholic school, could not ignore problems faced by the previous board of management, and so awarded €50,000 to O'Farrell for her constructive or forced dismissal as principal of St Bridget's, Singland, Limerick.

Gerald Flynn is an employment specialist with Align Management Solutions, gfflynn@alignmanagement.net

People Problems

Canon law and controversy in the classroom

BY GERALD FLYNN

Employment law can often be complex, but as a Limerick school principal recently found,

matters can get especially complicated when your job is also affected by Roman Catholic canon law, with a Polish cardinal in the Vatican calling some of the shots.

Betty O'Farrell was appointed principal of St

Brigid's, a large primary school in Limerick, in 2005, having taught there since 1979.

A few months after her appointment, "issues arose" following a school inspector's

evaluation of one teacher's abilities. Over three years' later, in March 2009, St Brigid's school board chairman wrote to the Catholic Bishop of Limerick, the school's patron, seeking his approval to dismiss the unsatisfactory teacher.

In December of that year, when the process was under way, a Department of Education official wrote to the school chairman to say that the minister no longer had direct power over the removal of teachers and that any dismissal would be an issue directly for the school board.

The teacher at the centre of the proposed dismissal was on administrative leave and appealed under what was known as the Maynooth Statute N26482 canon law, which states that "... to avoid prejudice against the management of schools a clerical manager is forbidden to dismiss any teacher or assistant, male or female or to give notice of dismissal to them until the Bishop be notified, so that the teacher, if he/she so desires, may be heard in his/her own defence by the Bishop."

The year 2009 was not a great one for Catholic Church leaders in Limerick. In De-



Gerald Flynn

signed the decree of abrogation in September 2011, setting aside this ecclesiastical employment appeals mechanism.

Things in Limerick had, however, moved on. Although the local bishop was gone and his position was sede vacante, the canon lawyers and church industrial relations advisers, along with the diocesan secretary Rev Paul Finnerty, decided to uphold the teacher's appeal or "petition" on the grounds of procedural fairness, and to deny permission to the school board to proceed with the dismissal.

O'Farrell stated that she was told by the school board chairman that, as the teacher could not be dismissed – having successfully invoked the 'Maynooth Statute' – as principal, she would have to stay in the classroom monitoring the teacher and class.

She could not see how she could continue to work as school principal if she was to be in a single class at all times and decided to retire from August 2011.

The school board sought ways to challenge the canon law decision and, after deciding not to pursue an expensive judicial review, the board

members resigned, leaving the local parish priest as the single-member school manager.

He asked O'Farrell to stay on, but she went ahead with her resignation and he appointed a new school principal.

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State Street Global Advisors has appointed a new vice-president and senior real estate asset manager. Daragh Clarke joins from Prescient Investment Managers, where he was head of property for 18 months. Before that, he held the concurrent roles of deputy head of property and senior manager at AIB Investment Managers for eight years.



First Auto Finance has appointed two new directors. Eimear Collieran has been the company's new business manager since its launch in 2011. Before that, she spent four years with Shared Home Investment Plan as a commercial manager.



Ray Murphy joined First Auto Finance just over two years ago as sales manager, from Trader Media Group where he was sales manager for 21 months.



Donal O'Dwyer has joined Kilkenny-based chartered accountancy firm Carrigan O'Dwyer as a partner. O'Dwyer was formerly financial controller at Killarney Communications for two years, and chartered accountant at Noel Ryan & Co for eight years.

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In addition to being a qualified accountant, the successful candidate will possess post qualification experience at a suitably senior level in areas of relevance to the role and possess extensive knowledge of Financial Reporting Standards.

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The deadline for the receipt of applications is **5:00pm on 21 March 2014**. Late applications will not be considered.

A detailed job description, together with further information on IAASA and its activities, can be obtained at www.iaasa.ie.

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