**NURTURING ENGAGEMENT, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY IN A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTE - A PRACTICTIONERS PERSPECTIVE**

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**Abstract:** In meeting the requirements of the knowledge economy, Florida (2005) argues for the need to develop talent. Nurturing talent and collaboration in higher education institutions (HEIs) is an imperative of successful organisations and this is predicated on the creation of an empowered and positive work climate which values employees, embraces equality and diversity and encourages a spirit of openness and inclusivity. This is a difficult and complex challenge for any organisation. This paper, which deliberates upon the results of strategic initiatives designed to promote an open and inclusive spirit while fostering talent engagement and innovation amongst employees in one HEI in the mid-west of Ireland, also considers the impact of New Public Management (NPM). Empirical research in the form of a questionnaire was conducted in order to examine perceptions of organisational climate, quality of work life and quality of work relationships/collaboration. This was distributed to all 1,150 employees, and a 60% response rate was achieved.

The impact on climate is significant with 93% indicating the university was ‘a good place to work’; ‘high motivation’ (88%); ‘proud to work for the university’ (91%); ‘feeling safe and secure’ (94%); and ‘it’s not just a job to me’ (95%). The quality of job satisfaction was above the national HEI norms. Clearly, attention to organisation climate, equality, diversity and gender issues pay dividends.

**Keywords:** Equality; Diversity; Inclusion; Engagement; Empowerment