Eliminating discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation
Dedicating efforts to promoting equal opportunities in employment

Growing support from the public and private sectors for the Code of Practice against Discrimination in Employment on the Ground of Sexual Orientation has been noted recently.

The Government has played an active role in promoting the Code of Practice against Discrimination in Employment on the Ground of Sexual Orientation (the Code) and appealing to the public and private sectors for voluntary adoption of the Code in recent years, as part of the enhanced effort to promote equal opportunities on the ground of sexual orientation in the community.

Setting out good practices to eliminate discrimination

The Code was issued by the Government to facilitate the elimination of discriminatory practices in the employment field. To achieve this aim, it provides clear definitions of “sexual orientation”, “discrimination”, “harassment” and “vulgarisation”, as well as recommends good practices in various aspects of employment, including recruitment, appraisal, promotion, posting and training, dismissals, redundancies, handling of grievances, etc.

Increasing number of organisations adopting the Code

Since the Government first wrote to the top management of major employers to appeal for their adoption of the Code in the latter half of 2013, the number of organisations that have pledged to adopt the Code has been on a rising trend. In August 2014, around 90 organisations had pledged to adopt it and to date, the number has doubled, with more than 180 organisations from both the public and private sectors.

It is indeed encouraging to see more and more organisations adopting the Code and participating in building Hong Kong as a society that upholds equal opportunities and mutual respect.

Retaining the best talents by creating a fair working environment

Being one of the most representative and well-established chambers of commerce in Hong Kong, the Chinese Manufacturers’ Association of Hong Kong (CMA) belongs to the first batch of organisations that pledged to adopt the Code. Dr Eddy Li, President of CMA, shared that CMA supported the maintenance of a harmonious society featuring individuals with diversified backgrounds, and believed that no one should be treated unfairly or subjected to discrimination or harassment at work because of his or her sexual orientation.

With over 3,000 corporate members from various sectors of industry and trade, CMA took the lead in pledging to adopt the Code, with a view to setting a good example for its corporate members and other enterprises to follow. “Adopting the Code does not cause any trouble to our daily operation,” Dr Li said. “On the contrary, it brings benefits. It is easy to understand that when employees see a level playing field, they will definitely work harder for their career and own future, thereby increasing productivity. Besides that, adopting the Code can also help enhance corporate image which brings business. Hence, I see no reason for CMA not to support the Code and set an example.”

Dr Li also foresees the increased importance of creating a discrimination-free working environment for employees of different sexual orientation. “In this globalised world, we see more and more leaders and outstanding people with different sexual orientation. To attract and retain talents, Hong Kong certainly needs to set a fair working environment for all,” he concluded.

Fulfilling social responsibility for promoting equal opportunities

With over 7,000 staff members and 28,000 students, the University of Hong Kong (HKU) is also one of the pioneer pledgers who have a strong sense of social responsibility in building Hong Kong into a discrimination-free society.

“The University adopted the Code as a public demonstration of our commitment to anti-discrimination,” Dr Steven J. Cannon, Executive Vice President (Administration & Finance) of the University of Hong Kong, said. “We have had about 3,000 job applicants in the past year. They were all informed that their applications were assessed in a fair manner based on objective criteria, such as relevant working experience, language and management capability.”

Mr Tam supplemented that sexual orientation was one’s personal privacy which must be respected and handled with care. With an enlightened management, Chun Wo has established a Staff Caring Programme and a hotline to provide counselling and assistance for staff as well as to handle staff complaints and grievances, including those in relation to sexual orientation. “If we do not consider one’s sexual orientation in making friends, let alone manage staff in our company. Adopting the Code is one of our measures to retain the best talents and to cultivate a cohesive working environment that values professionalism and equal opportunities,” Ms Lo added.

People with different sexual orientations should respect one another, and embrace their differences

To attract and retain talents, Hong Kong certainly needs to set a fair working environment for all

Dr Eddy Li Sau-hung, President of the Chinese Manufacturers’ Association of Hong Kong