

## **Women still struggle for fair treatment**

Knowledge exchange (KE) is growing rapidly around the globe, and there is also an increasing awareness of the importance of gender equality. In response to these welcome changes, the University of Hong Kong (HKU) has launched the UN HeForShe initiative.

As the KE manager at HKU, I attended a lunch seminar last month where the university's chancellor and president, Professor Peter Mathieson, gave a speech, "The Gender Parity Report: Implications for the HKU Community and Next".

He said the university was committed to:

- \* Hiring more women to join its senior management team;
- \* encouraging Hong Kong to follow overseas practice where a pro-rata basis of performance is applied to part-time female staff; and,
- \* Implementing a change in policy and practice to promote gender equality.

Less than 10 per cent are deans, and about 20 per cent are associate and assistant deans.

This shows that there is a need to hire more women for senior management. The global trend of hiring more women in senior management level at universities is emerging, as fewer are staying at home as they did in the past.

Most of them have improved economic opportunities and a better chance to climb the career ladder.

THE 10-10-10 HeForShe campaign has laid out an ambitious plan. It aims to see a group of 10 women as heads of states, 10 as CEOs of government corporations and 10 women become university presidents.

Regarding Professor Mathieson's second aim, most part-time employees are women. In Hong Kong, they do not get paid on a pro-rata basis and do not have the same entitlements as female colleagues who work full time and get maternity leave and other benefits. Some may be doing so many hours that they are virtually full time, but this is neither recognised nor appreciated.

On changes in policy and practice, some men say that three days of paternity leave (five at HKU) they get are not enough, while women get 10 weeks' maternity leave. It has to be asked if this is discrimination.

More studies on changing policy and practice to benefit working mothers and fathers are needed.

HKU will set up a task force to foster family values and implement more measures to change policy and practice.

Reinforcing respect for family values in the workplace should be a global trend. Employees who have an employer which takes this approach will be more productive.

Ivy Lai, KE Manager, HKU

HKU is trying to achieve greater gender equality.