

Module: Principles of Professional Legal Practice

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Assignment 2 - Equality and Diversity

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Contents

Introduction 5

Main body 5

1. Stress the real-world advantages of accepting diversity and equitable treatment: 6
2. Possible problems and ways to improve: 7
3. The Importance of Diversity and Equal Opportunity for Legal Representation 7
4. Improving Client Confidence and Contentment 8
5. Influence on Career Progress and Promotion: 9
6. Advising Persistent Study and Modification 9

Conclusion 10

Referencing list 10

Introduction

Ethics and principles of professional conduct are the north stars for solicitors as they chart a course towards doing what is right and maintaining their own personal and professional integrity. The Solicitors Regulation Authority's (SRA) Principles of Regulation and Code of Conduct serve as the foundation of this code of ethics. These documents provide a detailed overview of the core beliefs and ethical requirements necessary to uphold the highest standards in the legal profession. This essay sets out on a quest to investigate the fundamental principles of professional practise and conducts a thorough analysis of the essential ethical demands set forth in the SRA Principles and Code of Conduct. By putting these principles to use in different contexts, we see how crucial they are in forming a law practise that is both ethically responsible and committed to protecting the rule of law and fostering social justice (Henderson,2021).

Main body

Principles of fairness, integrity, and justice are central to the work of lawyers. The foundation of these values is equality and diversity, guaranteeing that lawyers will uphold these objectives in their work. The Equality Act of 2010 is a landmark piece of legislation that aims to eliminate bias and expand access to opportunity for all. Age, handicap, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation are among the nine basic characteristics identified and protected by this Act. To prevent discrimination and guarantee that justice is administered without bias, it is critical that those working in the legal field have a thorough understanding of these protected traits (Eikhof,2020).

Solicitors are obligated to adhere to the ethical standards outlined in the SRA Code of Conduct (2019). The promotion of equality, diversity, and inclusion is given special focus in Principle 9 of the Code. "Acting in a way that encourages equality, diversity, and inclusion" is one of the duties of a lawyer, along with "maintaining public trust and confidence in the provision of legal services." The integrity of the legal profession depends on all members of society having equal access to and benefiting from legal services, and this principle is important to achieving these goals.

In addition, the Code requires solicitors to treat all clients, coworkers, and third parties equally. Solicitors, as stated in Outcome 9.2, must not engage in any form of discrimination, including that based on the protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act of 2010. This all-encompassing obligation entails doing things like making linguistic adjustments and reaching out to people of all backgrounds and skills. By meeting these responsibilities, lawyers actively contribute to creating a more welcoming legal community and combating any biases that may exist within the legal system (Köllen,2021).

1. Stress the real-world advantages of accepting diversity and equitable treatment:

There are various real-world benefits and implications that come from the legal profession's embrace of equality and diversity. Professional lawyers help create a more equitable system by guaranteeing everyone equal access to the justice system. As a result, the public has more faith in the justice system, and lawyers are seen as more unbiased. Having more people with different

backgrounds and experiences in the legal system leads to better problem-solving and more original strategies.

In addition, the broader societal aims of establishing an inclusive and equitable society are consistent with the promotion of equality and diversity within the legal profession. Legal professionals improve their ability to address systemic challenges and advocate for positive change when they actively connect with different populations and gain an understanding of their specific needs. Participation like this helps build trust in the legal system and paves the way for a more equitable and just society to emerge (Grieble,2021).

2. Possible problems and ways to improve:

Despite the fact that considerable strides have been made towards more diversity and inclusion in the legal industry, there are always challenges to overcome and areas that may be improved. Unconscious biases, which can have an effect on judgement, continue to be a concern. Unconscious biases can have an impact on judgement. Professionals are required to regularly participate in self-assessment and training in order to recognise and reduce biases in their work. This is necessary to ensure that everyone is treated fairly within the legal system. Another obstacle that continues to be a problem is expanding the number of underrepresented groups that are represented at all levels of leadership within the profession. If efforts were made to increase representation from underrepresented groups in the legal community, the community as a whole would reap the benefits of more diverse opinions and decision-making (Grieble,2021).

3. The Importance of Diversity and Equal Opportunity for Legal Representation

Access to justice for all members of society depends on fostering an environment of equality and diversity. When discussing the law, the term "access to justice" refers to the idea that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, should have equal access to the judicial system and the remedies it provides. Both overt and covert forms of discrimination can serve as roadblocks that prevent marginalised communities from realising their full legal potential. By placing a premium on diversity and inclusion, lawyers may remove these roadblocks and create conditions in which all members of society can participate fully in the legal system (Syed,2020).

Some examples of the difficulties that members of marginalised groups may face include a lack of cultural awareness, insufficient accommodations, and language barriers. The fact that vulnerable people are not further marginalised by the legal process depends on lawyers who are aware of and working to overcome these difficulties. This not only helps maintain ethical standards, but it also improves the efficiency and impartiality of the judicial system.

4. Improving Client Confidence and Contentment

When hiring an attorney, clients should count on having their best interests represented and their rights upheld. When attorneys show they care about issues of diversity and inclusion, their clients have more faith in them. When professionals show appreciation for their patients' individual experiences and perspectives, those patients are more likely to feel heard, understood, and cared for (Edwards,2020).

In addition, a group of lawyers with a variety of specialisations and years of experience can approach a case from a number of unique perspectives. The fact that attorneys come from a variety of cultural

backgrounds and have a wide range of personal experiences is excellent news for the client since it may result in the development of novel perspectives on legal difficulties. This is beneficial to the bottom line of the company as well as to its reputation in the community (Tan,2019).

5. Influence on Career Progress and Promotion:

Creating a more inclusive and diverse workplace provides far-reaching benefits for those working in the legal field. Successful law firms and legal organisations recruit talented people from all walks of life by aggressively promoting inclusiveness. This variety fosters a fertile environment for the sharing of insights and experiences among professionals.

In addition, a level playing field and healthy competition in the legal sector are facilitated by the establishment of promotion channels predicated on merit rather than favouritism or bias. The legitimacy and integrity of the legal profession are strengthened when lawyers advance primarily on merit rather than family connections (Edwards,2020).

6. Advising Persistent Study and Modification

Embracing diversity and equitable treatment is a continual process that calls for new insights and strategies. To keep up with the ever-changing social norms, legal standards, and best practises on equality and diversity, legal professionals must participate in ongoing training. This dedication guarantees that lawyers will always be strong supporters of their clients and protectors of the law.

Furthermore, as society's norms change, so must the legal profession in order to meet the new challenges of diversity and equality. For instance, gender identity and digital accessibility are two topics that have come to the fore in recent years. To give clients the best advice possible, lawyers need to be up-to-date on these problems.

Conclusion

In today's increasingly globalised and diverse society, it is essential for those who work in the legal field to have a strong commitment to issues of equality and diversity. These concepts revolve around issues of equity and justice, and in addition to that, they have practical applications for both legal professionals and the general public. Adherence to the Equality Act of 2010 and the SRA Code of Conduct (2019) guarantees that all members of the public are granted fair treatment, that they have equal access to justice, and that they can take part in the judicial process without being subjected to discrimination. Because of this commitment to diversity and inclusion, the legal community will ultimately become one that is more just and welcoming to all. In a world that is ever-evolving, an unwavering dedication to equality and diversity is required if the legal profession is to preserve its dignity and continue to play an important role in society.

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