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## **The Future of Surveying in Ghana: Reflections of Young Surveyors on Life after School**

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***Abstract.** Quality surveying practice necessitates periodic evaluation of surveying courses and professional training programs. Based on interviews of 208 students and probationers who intend to become professional surveyors in Ghana, we analyse the prospects and challenges of surveying training and employment in Ghana. We find that technical competence is narrowly construed, business competence is given inadequate attention and labour concerns are completely ignored in the training. It seems that the surveying profession and training fail to adequately engage with social concerns. These findings constitute an urgent need for the expansion of the concept of ‘professionalism’ in surveying practice in Ghana.*

***Keywords:** Ghana, surveying, students, Africa, career, employment*

### **1 Introduction**

In Ghana ...there is evidence of widespread disparity between what educational institutions produce and what the labour market wants. This trend has led to the “mismatch” between educational output and labour market requirements creating unemployment problems in the country. ...Quantifying the mismatch, it was estimated that about 47 per cent of social science and arts students who graduated in 1999/2000 likely entered into unemployment, given the ...skills demanded at that time (Karikari-Ababio, 2006)...

Graduate unemployment has been one of the social cankers that are [sic] draining our dear country [Ghana] of her ability to use the products from the highest institutions of learning- universities not forgetting the polytechnics. There

is no single day you do not hear one complaining about graduate unemployment. This is the problem facing us (*The Ghanaian Chronicle*, 2008).

The above quotations eloquently capture the horror of graduating from a tertiary institution in Ghana. So desperate is the situation that answers have been sought from both religion and science. On the campuses, all-night prayer sessions are organised for final year students to invoke the help of some inscrutable providence who would bestow on the finalists the 'grace for jobs' after graduation. More 'realistic' solutions have also been proffered. For example, some policy makers have called on tertiary institutions to consult with the private sector when drafting the content of the courses on offer. Other suggestions include making research relevant to the private sector and ensuring that students obtain practical experience through internships before they graduate (see, for example, Boateng and Ofori-Sarpong, 2002; Karikari-Ababio, 2006). Others (e.g. Akrofi and Ayer, 2009 and Quagraine, 2002) have recommended that graduates need to familiarise themselves with new technologies such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to become more employable. Although these latter observers acknowledge the broader pre-requisites of learning the GIS technology, such as collaboration between government and the private sector, they contend that the prospects of learning these new skills (and hence getting employed) are good because there are already some institutions in Ghana which have expertise in GIS. To these suggestions, John Kufour, the ex president of Ghana, has added that graduates should try to team up and form consultancies rather than look for jobs in already established organisations (GNA 2008). For graduates of professional courses, the common recommendation is to join professional bodies to enhance their employability because, in the year 2000, for example, 25 per cent of all jobs advertised required some qualification from professional bodies (Boateng and Ofori-Sarpong, 2002, p.16).

This paper is about employment decisions and conditions of 'young surveyors' (trainee surveyors and surveying students) in Ghana. The focus on employment decisions and conditions of work is important, particularly for two reasons. At the national level, a joint research by the Government of Ghana, International Labour Organisation and the United Nations Development Programme (2004) has shown that an employment-intensive economic development approach holds the most promise for Ghana's quest to become a middle income country. As such any effort to shed light on employment-related questions such as the present study is important.

The second, more surveying-specific reason is that decent employment is key to ensuring a complete concept of professionalism in surveying (International Federation of Surveyors, 2006). In spite of this importance, little is known about the employment decisions and conditions of surveyors in Ghana. Indeed employment issues in technical and professional services in Ghana are, in general, poorly understood. The National Coordinating Committee on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NACVET) in Ghana whose mandate it is to coordinate skills training is yet to design a national policy for skills development (International Labour Organisation, 2008, p.41).

This paper is not the answer to this gap, of course. But it is an attempt to contribute to one aspect of this gap, namely employment and work conditions of young surveyors. The particular group of young surveyors studied is the valuation and estate management cohort in the Ghana Institution of Surveyors, which is the professional body of surveyors in Ghana. The rest of the paper is divided into 4 sections. Section 1 describes the process of becoming a surveyor in Ghana. Section 2 explains how we conducted the study. Section 3 describes the work conditions of probationers, particularly the nature of the relationship between them and more senior surveyors and describes how that relationship, in turn, impacts work conditions of young surveyors. Section 4 analyses the career options of young surveyors. The insights from sections 1 to 4 provide a basis for making some recommendations about how to improve professional surveying practice and training in Ghana.

## 2 Becoming a surveyor in Ghana

To become a surveyor in Ghana, academic training in valuation and estates management is a pre-requisite. Valuation and estates surveying graduates possess property-related degrees or Higher National Diplomas (HND) in land economy or estate management respectively. The Department of Land Economy of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology awards the degree<sup>1</sup> while the Department of Estate Management of Kumasi Polytechnic awards the Higher National Diploma in Estate Management<sup>2</sup>.

**Table 1.** *Student Enrolment in Valuation and Estates Surveying Courses in Ghana.*

Year	1999–2000	2000–2001	2001–2002	2002–2003	2003–2004	2004–2005	2005–2006	2006–2007	2007–2008	2008–2009
Land Economy	32	100	100	61	70	90	82	77	89	98
Estate Management	63	80	58	49	49	56	90	89	98	76

Source: Department of Land Economy, 2009; Department of Estate Management, 2009.

Table 1 shows student enrolment in both the land economy and estate management programs. It shows that from 1999 to 2009, a total of 1,507 people have studied general surveying. An estimated 90 per cent of those students enrolled on the land economy and estate management programs graduate annually with diplomas and degrees. Teachers, other surveyors and some policy makers

<sup>1</sup> The University for Development Studies has started running a degree course in real estate and land management. The program is in its second year and has proved to be popular among students. In 2009, for example, it attracted 173 students who enrolled on the program.

<sup>2</sup> A new degree program in Bachelor of Technology in Estate Management will start running alongside the HND soon. In addition, the HND in Estate Management course has started running in Wa Polytechnic.

encourage the graduates to join the Ghana Institution of Surveyors (GhIS), particularly because that association would guarantee them ‘professional skills’ and ‘practical experience’, which, in turn, would enable them to obtain jobs, either as valuers, property managers, land managers, construction development managers or estate managers.

These services are not fully monopolised by members of GhIS, of course: most estate agents are not members of the institution (Obeng-Odoom, 2009); most construction managers are registered members of the Ghana Real Estate Developers’ Association (GREDA) (Mahama and Antwi, 2006) and most property managers are unregulated companies with no affiliation to the GhIS (Karley, 2009). But, as employers have become interested in professional qualifications in Ghana (Boateng and Ofori-Sarpong, 2002 and see Mensah and Owusu-Mensah, 2002 for how this interest has led to increasing distance education programs in Ghana) and some studies show a positive relationship between performance and professional qualification (Robson et al., 2009), it is reasonable for the students to believe that joining the Ghana Institution of Surveyors (GhIS) may improve the prospect of a good surveying career.

To become ‘professionals’ of GhIS, the graduates have to train with surveying firms accredited by the Ghana Institution of Surveyors for a minimum of two years as probationers. Article 7, clause 1, of the GhIS constitution defines probationers as: persons who have passed the relevant examinations of the Institution or such other examinations as may be accepted by the Council in lieu thereof and who are receiving approved practical training.

That is, a person becomes a probationer after he/she has graduated with a property-related degree or diploma and has been so accepted by the GhIS. In order to be admitted as a probationer, the applicant has to provide evidence that s/he has been accepted by an accredited training firm which has undertaken to train the probationers for at least two days per week. According to clause 3 of Article 7:

The maximum period during which a person may remain a student and Probationer shall be limited to a total of ten years in both classes; provided always the Council shall have power to vary the period either generally or in the case of particular persons.

The probation period and the exercises thereafter are supposed to maintain high standards of professionalism in surveying practice.

Surprisingly, the GhIS does not explicitly define ‘professionalism’ under ‘section 1 – Definitions’ of its constitution. There are some indications of what professionalism might be in the *Professional Code of Ethics* (GhIS, 1996) especially under ‘professionalism, accuracy and clarity’. Section 17 of the Code contains 9 different scenarios of ‘unethical behaviour’ which suggest that the ‘ethical’ surveyor is professional. But is ethical behaviour the only measure of professionalism?

### **3 Conceptual framework**

Several authors have emphasised different aspects of professionalism. For instance, Larry Bell (1990) argued that the general framework of professionalism is built

around character, status, standards and methods. Therefore, professionalism goes beyond the knowledge of ethics and rules in the professional book (Oates, 1993).

Another aspect of professionalism is power. Hanlon (1998), a leading writer on this theme, uses the concept to analyse the struggles within and between professions (e.g. law, medicine) and the rest of society, particularly the state and private capital. Questions such as how service is rendered by the professions and whether service is rendered for pay or because of need are central to his analysis. He conceptualises the professions as those service groups that see themselves as such or which by law are classified as 'professions'. Hanlon (1998) contends that the professions recurrently redefine professionalism to maintain their control of the services they render. Hanlon further argues that the training of professionals typically make them self-seeking and profit-oriented. This emphasis contrasts with the meaning of professionalism as a means of providing service to people in need, with little resources. In contemporary society, Hanlon (1998) argues, to be professional is to be able to satisfy the rich and mighty client. Nevertheless, he believes that there remain a few professionals whose primary interest is in performing 'social service'. Thus, for Hanlon, professionalism is a symbol of power.

The question of professionalism as a symbol of power is taken up by others, notably Evetts (2003). Unlike Hanlon, Evetts (2003) examines the motor that drives professionalism. Thus she moves away from analysing the meaning of the concept of professionalism to exploring the motivation behind its changing meaning. She points out two main motivations: the normative motivation which emphasises the positive role professions play in society and the ideological motivation, defined as using professions to create a hegemonic belief system or a 'market' for the professionals or even a political movement that seeks favours for those in the professions (Evetts, 2003, pp.397- 399). She argues that professions are 'elite conspiracies of powerful occupational workers...protecting their own market position through controlling the license to practise and protecting their elite positions' (Evetts, 2003, p. 401 and p.403).

The perspective of professionalism as a mechanism for an elite group to protect its position is adopted by Lincoln (2006). Using data in the form of the pass rate on the bar examination in 50 states in the USA, she argues that the bar association controls entry into the legal profession in order to curtail competition for clients. She shows how the entry standards are changed and reshaped in order to limit entry. By controlling how many people pass as professional lawyers, Lincoln (2006) argues that the people within the professionals become the eventual winners rather than society. Therefore, professionalism is driven by a desire to improve the material conditions of the people in the profession rather than society.

Typically, these authors do not write with surveying in mind. However, Andrew Knight and Roy Morledge (2005) have applied the concept of professionalism more directly to surveying. As such, that effort is not be duplicated here. What follows is only a brief discussion of professionalism in surveying that would facilitate an understanding of the findings of this study.

The surveying profession has its roots in practice rather than theory. Thus in the early days, an intending professional surveyor was only sent to a surveyor

already reputed in the practice for training (Thompson, 1968). However, even then, concerns were expressed about the need for theory to complement practice. Arthur J. Mertzke (1927), for example, is on record to have said that ‘the building of the permanent structure of professional real estate education, erected on the solid foundations of the new science of Land Economics, can no longer be questioned’. The relatively recent phenomenon of ‘professionally accredited degree’ would suggest a concurrence with the need for professional training of surveyors to be grounded in theoretical training. This trend has led to the development of partnerships between professional bodies like the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and universities such as Cambridge and Reading to develop goals of university degrees that are relevant to professional practice (Plimmer, 2003).

So, as with the professions (law, medicine and divinity), modern day surveying education provides training in both theory and practice, with the latter delivered by others who are already experienced. The process of professionalisation is usually overseen by professional bodies such as the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors and the Ghana Institution of Surveyors (Knight and Morledge, 2005).

These institutions stress competence in the training of surveyors. Competence is, however, a word of many meanings (Oates, 1993). According to the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors (HKIS) (2006, p. 6):

Competency is defined as the skill or ability needed to perform the specific task within an occupation to the standard expected for employment. After completing your academic studies and upon entry into the APC [Assessment of Professional Competence] Scheme, you should have acquired the basic skills and knowledge of most practice-based competencies and theoretical knowledge (such as technical communication, business management, construction economics, information technology, environmental science, site surveying, construction technology, building services, construction law, etc.).

That is, competence can be said to be the application of theoretical knowledge enhanced by practical training to carry out a job. Bergemann *et al.* (2005) note that professional training gives a signal to employers that the beneficiary is ready for employment since she is both technically competent and commercially aware. As such, professional competence can be regarded as a combination of technical, interpersonal, financial, business and management skills (Plimmer, 2003; McGaghie, 1991). From this perspective, it is useful to attain skills such as: ethics, professional identity and accountability; conflict avoidance, management and dispute resolution procedures; collection, retrieval and analysis of information and data; customer care; environmental awareness; law; health and safety; information technology; oral communication; self management; team working, written/graphic communication and two further business management and interpersonal related competencies (Plimmer, 2003, p.13).

Four themes emerge from these skills. These are knowledge competence (technical surveying knowledge); business competence (business skills to meet customer demands); cognitive competence (ability to apply both business and

technical skills to solve the challenges of the surveying practice); and ethical/personal competence (possession of professional values that can be relied upon in the many dilemmas of the profession) (Kennie et al., 2000).

There appears, however, to be a lack of consensus on which of the competencies should be most emphasised in the training of a surveyor. Wendt (1955), for example, has noted that even though the real estate profession is taught from the standpoint of either pure land economics or real estate business, it is better to look at the professional as a business manager. He is, however, quick to emphasise that he does not advocate the demise of technical knowledge, but only a shift in focus. Daso and Woodward (1980), on the other hand, have emphasised that it is neither the technical knowledge nor business/general management that should characterise professional real estate education but rather a 'problem-solving' approach.

Despite this difference in emphasis, it could be argued that, generally, a professionally competent surveyor is one who has the technical skills of the practice and has sufficient business skills to satisfy society which is deemed to be the ultimate beneficiary of the work of a surveyor (see also Dean, 1997). As business persons, surveyors are inevitably employers. But, as employers, the International Federation of Surveyors (2006, p. 4) has noted that surveyors:

- Assume responsibility for all work carried out by their professional and non-professional staff;
- Assist their employees to achieve their optimum levels of technical or professional advancement;
- Ensure that their employees have proper working conditions and equitable remuneration; and
- Cultivate in their employees integrity and an understanding of the professional obligations of surveyors to society.

This broad framework, particularly the idea that professional education should emphasise technical and business competence, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the ability to create a conducive working environment for employees, can serve as the context for analysing the employment decisions and working conditions of young surveyors in Ghana. Most of the studies and policy documents we have reviewed to arrive at this framework do not explicitly refer to the Ghanaian case, of course, but they are relevant – at least, as a framework - because surveying education in Ghana is not socially insulated: it forms part of bigger professional bodies such as the International Federation of Surveyors.

#### **4 Methodology**

This work is based on the reflections of 208 surveying students and probationers, who were interviewed in Accra and Kumasi between 2008 and 2009. Out of the 208 people interviewed, 100 were probationers<sup>3</sup>. We interviewed them in order to

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<sup>3</sup> Made up of both degree-qualified and diploma-qualified graduates. Some of these called themselves, 'probationers', but had not actually registered with the GhIS, but this does not affect our findings because we were more interested in their experiences as 'apprentices' in surveying firms.

understand their experiences as trainee surveyors. We conducted the interview with structured questionnaires, 27 of which were administered through face-to-face contact. The rest were administered informally (53) in the form of conversation and through electronic mail (20), which was partly facilitated by the supply of email addresses by the then secretary of the Valuation and Estates Services (VES) division of GhIS<sup>4</sup>. We had initially made contact with 145 people, but, only 100 people could take part in this study, leading to a response rate of 69 per cent.

The rest of the interviewees were 108 students who were enrolled on surveying courses. Their interview was to enable us to understand their career plans. Both degree students (43) from the Land Economy Department, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, and Higher National Diploma students (65) from the School of Business, Kumasi Polytechnic were interviewed. We had a 100 per cent response rate with this cohort.

We did not choose our sample randomly: our procedure was purposive sampling. We were interested in what career paths surveying students, whom we readily had access to, would want to pursue, and the experiences of those probationers who were willing to take part in the study. Formal recording and sampling would have required a bigger pool of possible respondents. However, we had a smaller pool and some of the possible respondents would not readily volunteer information about their work conditions. Commenting on situations such as the one we faced, Sophie Laws and her team of researchers (2003, p.82) noted that 'Any group which fears officialdom can best be researched by working through friendship networks and trusted organisations, a process which cannot yield a strictly representative sample.' Our criteria for selecting the sample were whether our subjects were readily available and interested in our study. As such our data is not amenable to quantitative tests of significance to ascertain its validity. Tests such as Chi-square commonly used in quantitative research are inappropriate in this case because they are designed for samples which are randomly collected.

How is validity in a non random sample such as ours usually established? Replicability is one common test: if a researcher's methods are transparent to enable future researchers to repeat the procedure used for the research, it is usually deemed that the results are valid and reliable (King et al, 1996; Bryman, 2004, pp. 272–278; 2008, pp.31–32). Other standards relate to reporting the findings based on the non random sample, and include making claims which are supported only by the evidence while simultaneously acknowledging the weaknesses of the sample (Laws et al., 2003, pp.73–85). It is the reason we have reproduced the questions we asked and tried to explain how we conducted the study. This approach implies that while the results of the research cannot claim scientific status, they provide a useful indication of career plans of surveying students and conditions of employment of trainee surveyors.

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<sup>4</sup> The secretary sent a group email on January 6, 2008, to final year probationers, including one of us.



## 5 Characteristics of probationers and their work conditions

Between 2000 and 2008, 113 people registered as probationers of the GhIS as shown in table 2.

**Table 2.** Total number of probationers (degree qualified) from 2000–2008.

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
No. of probationers	11	14	12	–	19	14	3	25	15

Figures are from probationers' register at the head office of the GhIS, Accra (2008)

This number is small given that between the same period 1,507 people graduated with surveying degrees and diplomas (see table 1). Yet, there are many graduates who are affiliated to training/non-training surveying firms for 'experience' about whom there is no record.

Also undocumented is whether probationers are paid, either in cash or in kind. By the GhIS rules, probationers are not necessarily employees, so training firms are not under any obligation to pay them. The GhIS requires probationers to undergo at least two days of training. In practice, probationers with no full time employment work in the training offices throughout the week as do regular members of staff. They take part in field inspections and the preparation of technical reports. However, they are usually not allowed to meet 'high calibre clients' and barred from signing the reports they help to prepare. Furthermore, probationers are not usually given any business cards to identify them with the training firms and in nearly all cases 'do not exist' on any official document of their training firms. Their contribution to professional service is not sufficiently acknowledged.

Unpaid probationers survive mainly on tips from clients. Depending on how rich/poor a client is (usually not high profile client) tips could range from \$5 to \$20. It is hard to estimate how much these tips amount to per week because they depend on, among others, how many jobs come up in the week, the size of the team that undertakes the exercise, and the economic status of the client. When unpaid probationers are asked about how much they get from tips, they commonly say, 'the work is not good', which is a euphemism for \$10 a week or \$15 to \$20 a week for more 'senior' probationers for working from 8 in the morning to 5 in the evening, including weekends.

A few surveying trainees are paid. These probationers are usually recognised as part of their training firms. Their salaries range from \$200 to \$400. Compared to unpaid probationers, paid probationers have better conditions of service. But relative to other new graduates, paid probationers are worse off. For instance, in 2000, the average monthly salary of new graduates in the private commercial sector was \$700 (Boateng and Ofori-Sarpong, 2002, p.41), significantly higher than the salaries of paid surveyors in 2008 and 2009.

Also, although paid probationers work overtime, throughout the week and sometimes on weekends, they are not paid for these extra hours. They may meet high profile clients but, as with the unpaid probationers, cannot sign the reports they prepare. If, however, a probationer (paid or unpaid) is able to elicit jobs, carry

them out and give the final report to the ‘professionals’ to sign, the probationers are usually praised, described as ‘innovative’ and in possession of ‘professional acumen’. For signing the final report, the professional surveyors are entitled to from 50 to about 60 per cent of the fee paid to the probationer.

Young surveyors have to endure this process because it is part of the process of becoming a professional. The GhIS implicitly reinforces the situation by lobbying state and private institutions to use the services of only those graduates who have undergone the professional training process. Annually, GhIS (2009, emphasis in original) publishes the following statement in the print media and on its official website:

The Governing Council of the Ghana Institution of Surveyors (GhIS) presents the underlisted fully paid up Individual Members and Practising Firms IN GOOD STANDING ... for the information of all Government Ministries, Departments, Agencies/Parastatals, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies, Public and Private Corporate Bodies and the General Public. Furthermore The Governing Council strongly advises the above-mentioned employers to use Surveyors and Firms it recognizes, who are thus bound by its: Constitution, Code of Conduct and Ethics, Disciplinary Procedures and Conditions of Engagement and Rules of Conduct.

The GhIS adopts a rather wide and unspecified conception of monopolised real estate activities, although its members do not have the sole legal rights to deliver surveying services, probably suggesting that it could narrow down the societal domain of its activities to create, at least, a defacto monopoly for its members. In practice, it is able to regulate the activities of its own affiliates and members such as probationers.

These experiences raise the question of how well the conditions of engagement of trainee surveyors compare with international labour policies. According to the International Labour Organisation (2002), decent work is one which is secure, protected and recognised. The conditions of probationers in Ghana fall short of this standard. Of course, workers in other industries in Ghana face similar problems. In the road sector, for example, the Social Aspects of Construction (SAC) study established that, in the roads sector, ‘health and safety measures were not being taken, correct benefits were not being given to locally recruited temporary workers and “casual workers” continue to attract benefits distinct from other workers’ (Stiedl and Tajgman, 2004, p.1).

Nevertheless, the situation of young surveyors seems to be particularly harsh when compared with other apprentices in Ghana. A study by ILO (2008, p.15) on the conditions of work of apprentices in Ghana showed that, unlike surveying apprentices, about 83 per cent of them receive financial and in kind support from masters and in an estimated 66.5 per cent of the cases, the allowance received was higher than US\$153. This evidence suggests that, while the poor conditions of service for workers may transcend the surveying industry, the degree of the problem among young surveyors may be particularly high.

## 6 Probationers' competence

As discussed in the section on the concept of professionalism, a professional surveyor should also be competent in business management and technical surveying knowledge. Table 3 contains a summary of answers to the questions we asked our respondents about how they perceive their training in terms of competence.

*Table 3. Summary of Answers Given by Probationers.*

<b>Questions</b>	<b>% respondents</b>
<i>1. Would you say, in general terms that your training is skewed towards technical competence to the expense of business competence?</i>	
Yes	85
No	15
<i>2. In which of the following areas do you have the most exposure?</i>	
Valuation (Cost Method)	91
Valuation (Income and Market Methods)	5
Property/Facilities Management	2
Agency	2
<i>3. Which of the following skills are you often taught at the office?</i>	
Writing Valuation Reports	95
Marketing yourself	0
Writing Proposals for Property Services	3
Writing Feasibility Reports	2
<i>4. Are you taught how to win clients?</i>	
Yes	35
No	65
<i>5. Are you taught how to dress professionally?</i>	
Yes	74
No	26

Source Authors' fieldwork, 2008

Table 3 shows that young surveyors perceive their training to be very strong in terms of technical competence. However, it reveals other aspects of the surveying training in Ghana, which are yet to be reported in other studies:

1. Business Competence is not a prominent feature in professional training of probationers.
2. Professional training is biased towards technical competence.
3. Technical professional training is further biased towards valuation.
4. Within even technical valuation competence, probationers have competence largely in the Cost Method of Valuation.

The skewed nature of 'professional' surveying training towards cost method valuation has been found in other studies (e.g. Obeng-Odoom 2009; Ezaah 2007). It is a feature that arises from difficult local conditions such as limited

information about property transactions (See Grant 2009; Antwi and Adams 2003). Nevertheless, training young surveyors in only cost method reinforces the problem of estimating cost rather than value<sup>5</sup>.

## 7 Students' career plans

In the light of these problems with the training of probationers, it is important to assess whether current students want to continue careers in surveying. Table 4 summarises the responses we got from students regarding their career plans.

*Table 4. Satisfaction with career path taken.*

<b>Desire to divert</b>	<b>Kumasi Polytechnic</b>	<b>KNUST</b>	<b>All</b>
Yes	40	35	38
No	60	65	62

Source Authors' fieldwork, 2009.

Table 4 shows that, overall, 62 per cent of the students do not want to divert from a surveying-related career. A higher proportion of students enrolled on the land economy program (65 per cent) intend to remain in surveying-related careers. This finding is probably because students who graduate with the degree in Land Economy have better prospects in GhIS than HND graduates (see Obeng-Odoom, 2009). Thirty-eight per cent of all the students want to leave the surveying industry. Table 5 summarises the reasons such students gave for their plans.

*Table 5. Reason for thinking about changing career.*

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Kumasi Polytechnic</b>	<b>KNUST</b>	<b>All*</b>
Poor work conditions	33	14	26
Low prestige	25	7	18
Poor job prospects	21	36	26
Other	21	43	29

Source Authors' fieldwork, 2009.

\*Percentages do not add up to 100 due to approximations.

Over 80 per cent of the students who want to divert cite poor work conditions, poor job prospects and other reasons such as 'it takes too long to become a professional member of GhIS', 'old [existing] surveying firms have already captured the market' and 'the profession is boring and lacks innovation'. The rest of the students (18 per cent) want to change careers because a surveying career carries little prestige.

An interesting finding from the interviews is that 'valuation' and 'property management' are the most desired areas of specialisation for those who intend to remain in the surveying industry. Table 6 contains a breakdown of the findings:

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of the differences between cost and value, see Scarrett 2008; Johnson et al., 2000.

**Table 6.** *Most popular area of specialisation among students.*

Area	Kumasi Polytechnic (%)	KNUST (%)	All
Property management	34	20	28
Valuation	32	34	33
Real estate development	29	26	28
Estate agency	3	6	4
Investment appraisal	2	14	7

Source Authors' fieldwork, 2009.

A slight variation in preference exists. The students from Kumasi Polytechnic preferred property management to valuation while KNUST students chose valuation as their most preferred area of specialisation. Evidently, this difference in interest correlates with the distinction between the areas of emphasis in the two institutions. Estate agency is the least desired area of specialisation among the students.

We asked all the students – both those who wanted to remain and the others who wanted to divert – to name which other professions they would consider outside surveying.

**Table 7.** *Other career paths students would pursue besides surveying.*

Path	Kumasi Polytechnic	KNUST*	All*
Law	38	38	38
Banking and Finance	36	43	38
Academia	6	8	7
Other	20	13	17

Source Authors' fieldwork, 2009

\*Percentages do not add up to 100 due to approximations.

The most popular answers were 'law' and 'banking and finance'. Thirty-eight per cent of the HND students preferred law to banking and finance; but a higher proportion of the KNUST students (43 per cent) chose banking and finance over law. Overall, however, banking and finance was the most popular choice among all the students. It may be that the students' choices are driven by both prestige (especially in the case of law) and monetary rewards (as with banking and finance). Bankers in Ghana are relatively well paid. A graduate banker may be paid, on average, between \$600 and \$1,000 per month, which is about 3 times higher than the amount the average surveying graduate may earn in a surveying firm. Seven per cent intend to choose 'other career paths' such as 'insurance', 'journalism', 'computer engineering' and 'politics' while another 7 per cent want to become professional academics.

## 8 Concluding remarks

This study reveals two important career employment-related findings in the surveying industry in Ghana: The first relates to the careers young surveyors in Ghana want to pursue. The second finding relates to the inadequacies in the professional training of young surveyors: technical competence is narrowly

construed, business competence is given inadequate attention and labour concerns are completely ignored in the training. It seems that the surveying profession and training fail to adequately engage with social concerns. Students' desire to concentrate on valuation and property management, which are services the rich commonly require, suggests that the surveying profession mainly benefits the rich more than the majority of people in Ghana who have low incomes.

The experience of young surveyors is counter productive for the surveying profession in the long term. First, it might cause young surveyors to lose interest in the profession, which could turn the surveying profession in Ghana into an ageing profession. Although our survey revealed that a majority of students do want to remain in the profession, in the light of their broad interests: in banking, finance and law, there is a potential that they can to exit the surveying industry.

Second, the experience of young surveyors may reduce their productivity in the long term as their enthusiasm progressively wanes with time. Third, it could limit innovation as young surveyors may not want to think creatively because their contribution usually goes unrecognised. Fourth, the profession may lose its social credibility if the problem of exploitation becomes significantly high, paralling the situation where some consumers boycott products of corporations because of how they treat their workers (For examples, see Pines and Meyer, 2005). Finally, the nature of the training of young surveyors in Ghana undermines the surveyor's conception of professionalism. It is unprofessional surveying practice to ignore the contribution of young surveyors and withhold from them rights the usual worker enjoys, if young surveyors are deserving of them.

In spite of the non representativeness of the sample which served as the basis of this study, the experiences of those sampled constitute a reasonable basis to call for reforms at four levels, drawing on the effort of GhIS, young surveyors, academic institutions and the government of Ghana. The GhIS can lead the process, beginning with reforms in its rules: probationers can be regarded as part-time workers, with written contracts which define their rights and obligations. The rights can cover issues relating to acknowledgement of the contribution of young surveyors in professional reports and fora; stipulating a minimum wage for them and ensuring that firms contribute to the payment of insurance premiums to the Social Security and National Insurance Trust.

Young surveyors can facilitate the transformation. They can unionise and thereby have a common front and voice for negotiating their conditions of training, especially obtaining recognition for the work they do and standardising how much probationers should earn for their work. Having a voice to negotiate and obtaining a listening ear are two sides of the same coin and are consistent with international labour standards (International Labour Organisation, 2002; the International Federation of Surveyors, 2006).

Other recommendations are more broad ranging and require the team effort of training firms, GhIS and the academic institutions that offer surveying courses. Given that, typically, the poor do not buy or sell real property and so require agency services more than valuation or property management; estate agency can be made more attractive to students. One way of doing this is to compel existing

firms to collaborate with, and learn from, unlicensed estate agents who currently provide such services to the poor (see Obeng-Odoom, 2009).

Finally, the government of Ghana can play a role in improving labour conditions in Ghana, as a whole. The SAC study showed severe problems in labour laws in Ghana. Its recommendations remain valid, particularly legislating on explicit clauses which address appropriate labour standards and ensuring that they are complied with through effective monitoring and evaluation (Stiedl and Tajman, 2004). All these could ensure the training of an all-round surveyor: with technical know-how (technical competence), the ability to relate ethically and morally to other professionals and non professionals (business competence) and, above all else, command the social competence of serving the public.

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