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ABSTRACT

Access to housing and safe accommodation is an essential part of the South African government's commitment to poverty relief and the improvement of the wellbeing of its people. Despite the substantial commitment and progress by the South African government towards ensuring adequate housing, much still needs to be done to combat the existing challenges facing the low-cost housing industry. Amongst various challenges, the low-cost housing sector faces challenges of poor quality houses. The level of dissatisfaction due to poor quality appears to be dominant in the low-cost housing sector. These challenges are crucial as the impact is severely noticeable, both socially and economically.

The literature reviewed and the data collected is indicative that the use of emerging contractors who are likely inexperienced in the construction of low-cost houses is one of the major contributing factors to the poor quality of the end product. Emerging contractors form a majority of the construction contractors in the country and have been identified to play a vital role in the construction of low-cost houses. Constraints experienced by emerging contractors are posing risk to the projects and pose a challenge to the successful completion of these projects. The under-development of emerging contractors has resulted in poor workmanship and poor quality low-cost houses.

Subsequent to the identified problem areas, this study on investigation of the factors required to improve the quality of low-cost houses in eThekwini municipality, KwaZulu Natal was initiated. The research objectives pursued by this study aimed to compare the contributing factors to the poor quality of low-cost houses as perceived by housing project managers and emerging contractors; to compare key factors that can be improved to enhance the quality of low-cost houses as perceived by project managers and emerging contractors; and to identify quality management mechanisms currently available in the construction of low-cost houses and determine their influence level.

A mixed research methodology was employed, using the survey method as the research design and data collection, through semi-structured questionnaires. The questionnaires were hand delivered to forty (40) participants and twenty seven (27)

responses were received and analysed, which comprised ten (10) project managers and seventeen (17) emerging contractors.

Results from the study showed that there are undeniably issues of poor quality that include foundation failures, structural cracks and leaking roofs in the low-cost housing sector in eThekwini, KwaZulu Natal. It is evident from the analysis that there are many probable underlying causes to the poor quality of low-cost houses, which include: lack of continuous development for emerging contractors; insufficient subsidy amounts; the use of inferior materials; and the use of unskilled labourers on site. The results of the study indicated that shortcomings exist in terms of the necessary skills among emerging contractors, which means there is a huge need for continuous training on different important skills. The need for training of emerging contractors is enormous and that all aspects in terms of training should be considered to be of equal importance. It can also be determined that there is a lack quality management framework within the department and the municipality. These quality management frameworks need to be developed to ensure improvement in quality of the low-cost houses.

Keywords:

Emerging Contractors, Improve, Low-cost Housing, Poor Quality, Subsidy,