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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROJECT PERFORMANCE OF EMERGING CONTRACTORS IN GOVERNMENT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS AND THEIR EXPERIENCE AND TECHNICAL QUALIFICATIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF 30 PROJECTS CONDUCTED IN THE MPUMALANGA PROVINCE OVER THE 2011-2013 PERIOD

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ABSTRACT

This research set out to investigate two relationships; the relationship between technical qualifications and emerging contractor project performance, and the relationship between experience and emerging contractor project performance. The focus was on emerging contractors in the public sector. This study was motivated by the notion that emerging contractors generally fail and have poor project performance.

The objective of the report was to determine the general factors that affect emerging contractor performance and demonstrate the relationship between competence and project performance. Information pertaining to progress and performance for thirty projects from a government institution in Mpumalanga Province was collected. This information included contact details of the contractors who conducted the 30 government infrastructure projects. The contact details were used to collect contractors' curriculum vitaes and company profiles in order to extract information on qualifications and experience.

Literature has shown that the most prevalent issues facing emerging contractors in South Africa can be attributed to the contractors' competencies. These competencies include skills, experience, qualifications and project management knowledge. Other factors that affect emerging contractor performance include project delays caused by late payments by clients, shortage of labour and lack of financial resources and equipment.

The results of this study showed that contractors with technical qualifications and experience generally perform better than those with no technical background. It was also found that where there is no technical background, the level of education also affects the level of project performance. This study demonstrated the importance of the number of technical or construction related projects conducted by an emerging contractor company as compared to the number of years that the company has been in operation. The number of projects conducted, regardless of

timeline, is more beneficial to project performance than the number of years in operation in the construction industry.

This study recommends that focus should be drawn to the definite need to develop emerging contractor competence through skills development, training, collaborations and knowledge sharing. Competence development should focus on transferring technical knowledge and experience through policy formulation, collaboration of government and educational or training institutes. Focus should also be drawn to developing project management competence of emerging contractors in the South African public sector.