EXPOSING THE MISMATCH BETWEEN THE DRY WORLD OF POLICY AND THE REAL WORLD OF OPERATIONALISATION: A REFLECTION ON HOW HOUSING OFFICIALS HAVE ENGAGED WITH THE NATIONAL HOUSING CODE POLICY INSTRUMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I will reflect on the experiences of training over four hundred local and provincial housing officials on the national housing policy framework. This training was undertaken throughout South Africa, over an eight-year period. The training process provided a window, as a trainer, into official’s abilities, attitudes, and complex work environments (including power relations with political figures). This interaction exposed the nature of the mismatch between the dry world of policy (the Housing Code ) and the real world of operationalisation. The training also exposed things in the official’s daily work lives that militated against their ability to implement the policies. The focus of this reflection will be on the aspects of the training that provided insights into how they as officials engaged with the housing policy instruments. This would include their interpretation and understanding of the policy instruments; internal and external challenges they encountered in applying the instruments. It will also examine the official’s institutional contexts, in terms of available resources, the predominant culture of local and provincial government organisations and how knowledge is produced and disseminated within these organisations.
Through a series of post-training surveys and interviews, this paper will provide insights into factors influencing the implementation of policy instruments from the implementer’s perspective, in an African context. It is hoped, that these insights will contribute to the formulation of policy instruments that will be more appropriate to their policy implementation environments.