



Entrepreneurship Ecosystems and Innovation Hubs in East Africa: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship ecosystems and innovation hubs have become critical components in fostering economic development across East Africa, with South Africa playing a significant role as an emerging market. A qualitative approach was employed through semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from various sectors including government agencies, private sector companies, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations. Data collection involved thematic analysis to identify common themes and patterns across different regions and sectors. The study revealed that while South Africa has seen a notable increase in the establishment of innovation hubs over the past decade, there remains significant variation in their effectiveness across different geographic areas. For instance, urban centers have demonstrated higher levels of collaboration between ecosystem actors compared to rural settings. This research underscores the importance of tailored strategies for promoting entrepreneurship and innovation within South Africa's diverse geography, highlighting the need for targeted interventions that address regional disparities. Recommendations include developing a more integrated policy framework that supports cross-regional collaboration among ecosystem actors, particularly focusing on rural areas where support is currently limited. Additionally, fostering stronger ties with global innovation networks can enhance South Africa's capacity to attract and integrate international expertise and resources.

Keywords: *East African, entrepreneurial networks, innovation spaces, qualitative methodology, ecosystem analysis, indigenous entrepreneurship, collaborative networks*

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