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The role of Johannesburg universities in the emergence of an information and communication technology (ICT) cluster in Johannesburg

Chisenga, Rumbidzai

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ABSTRACT

The Information and Communication Technology sector in Gauteng contributes significantly towards the gross domestic product (GDP) of the South African economy. Studies identified the emergence of a technology cluster in Johannesburg in the late 1990s but highlighted that this cluster was notably weak in terms of research and development (Voyer 1997; Hodge, 1998). This study seeks to describe the role of Johannesburg universities in the emergence of an information and communication technology (ICT) cluster in Johannesburg. The mixed methodology was followed in the study. Data was collected by using questionnaires and conducting interviews to obtain quantitative and qualitative data. Respondents included school/department/centre heads and lecturers at the two Johannesburg universities: the University of Witwatersrand and the University of Johannesburg. The key findings of this study are:

- There is disparate activity in supporting Johannesburg-based ICT ventures through collaborative and contract research with Johannesburg ICT companies; amongst the schools, departments or centres that participated in the survey.

- There are isolated activities related to the incubation and commercialisation of spin off ICT ventures, in the university units represented by the respondents.

- There is some research-related collaboration and no commercialisation-related collaboration with the other Johannesburg university amongst the university units represented by the respondents.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge on the evaluation of university-industry linkages; and the relevance of academic entrepreneurship to cluster development.