

This study will examine the impact of the ‘entrepreneurial turn’ in higher education on the everyday life of academics, the interactions between universities and the academic profession and the consequences of these interactions for institutional change at flagship universities in three global cities - Hong Kong, Seoul, Tokyo in East Asia. Since the global spread of neo-liberalism in the 1990s, economic globalisation has intensified the ‘entrepreneurial governance’ in the social institution of higher education where funding is increasingly being allocated on a competitive basis. At the advent of the global knowledge-based economy, missions of universities have been undergoing substantial transformations, in which knowledge increasingly becomes a new driver of economic development. To guarantee future financial sustainability and secure further resources that would propel institutional excellence, universities have proactively pursued innovation in their everyday management. The literature debates the extent to which higher education institutions see a global convergence of change from ivory tower to ‘entrepreneurial university’ (Etzkowitz et al., 2008). The global trend of entrepreneurialism (for example Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000; Clark, 1998a, 1998b; Shattock, 2009; **Tang, 2014**) profoundly affects the interactions between universities, the academic profession and institutional change (Gumport, 2019). Despite the prevailing policy trends and emerging scholarship of this topic in Western literature (Rhoades & Stensaker, 2017), research on entrepreneurialism at flagship universities (Stensaker & Benner, 2013) and the academic profession in Asia is lacking (Yang, 2012). The impact of academic entrepreneurialism on East Asian flagship universities, academic life and institutional change remains unknown if the dearth of related research persists.

This study will draw on the methods of institutional ethnography (Smith, 2005). Unique from other qualitative methods, it offers the means to research institutional change as a ‘textually-organised relation’, which can only be accomplished in the coordinated actions of people as they go about their everyday work. The methods of institutional ethnography will capitalise on the ‘discursive resources’ (Marginson, 2011a) of the international academic profession to engage in diverse, decentred and deliberate conversations about the powerful trends of academic entrepreneurialism. By re-focusing and innovating the terms of debate and policy, this study will reconfigure the understanding of the East Asian flagship universities and academic entrepreneurialism in a larger democratic setting (Marginson, 2011; **Tang, 2015**). It will help formulate alternative narratives of ‘good university’ (Connell, 2019) by constructing new vocabulary which represents the diverse voices and critical insights about the institutional change of East Asian higher education.