Education Governance in Transition in Rural China

---- A Case Study of Yantian Village of Guangdong Province

Biliang Hu\(^1\) and Tony Saich\(^2\)

Administratively speaking, Yantian is a village under Fenggang Town, Dongguan City of Guangdong Province in China. It is one of the villages located in the hub of Pearl River Delta, the most resilient economic engine of China, close to Shenzhen and Hongkong, with sound transportation facilities. Blessed with favorable rainfall, sunlight and temperature conditions, Pearl River Delta used to be one of the important bases of grain production, especially rice production in China. Large inflow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into the region since reform and opening up has shaped a cluster of world processing and manufacturing in the region. Among those, electronics production witnessed impressive growth record, which directly contributed to the rise of Dongguan as the largest base in the world for production and processing of electronic products. In the past three decades, the whole region completed the transformation from an agricultural economy (mainly production of rice and sugarcane) to a manufacturing center of the world, mainly a production base for export-oriented processed goods, largely electronic products. Rapid industrial growth directly led to concentration of large number of labors and their family migrants from China’s inland areas into this region, which in turn enabled rapid development of urbanization. Thus, lots of new phenomena and features emerged in the region. This paper tries to focus our discussion on rural education and its transformation from the single government dominated system to a kind of new networked educational governance by taking one village from the region as an example. The first section of the paper is a brief introduction about the village’s geographical location, population and economic development; second section of the paper provides some evolutilional backgrounds of education development in the village; third section discusses how public schools working in the village; fourth section talks about how the village-run collective school growing up in the village; fifth section focuses on how the migrant workers’ children schooling in the village; sixth and seventh sections discuss the private education developments in the village and the final section of the paper is a short conclusion and the related policy implications.

Yantian Village in Guangdong Province

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**Geography**

An express route to Yantian is via Shenzhen, by plane or by train. Taxi drive is less than one hour from Shenzhen airport to Yantian Village, while it takes even lesser time driving from Shenzhen’s Luohu Railway Station to Yantian. Administratively, Yantian falls within jurisdiction of Dongguan City of Guangdong Province; however, the village is much closer to Shenzhen City (Figure 1). Dongguan City is 60 km to the northeast of Yantian; by contrast, Yantian is surrounded by Shenzhen to its east, south and west. Yantian is less than 30 km away from downtown Shenzhen City to its south, and only a little bit more than 30 km from Hongkong. It is about 6 km away from the town Fenggang which Yantian is directly under the town’s administration.

![Figure 1: Yantian Village is very close to Shenzhen and Hongkong](image)

Yantian covers a land area of 24 km$^2$, i.e. 36,000 mu$^3$, a plain surrounded by mountains. Terrain of Yantian resembles a basin, which is vividly described by villagers as “cornucopia”. Of course, the metaphor carries the beautiful aspiration of local people for the land they are born and raised. Yantian hosts a dozen of hills and mountains. Among those, Wanghai Mountain to the southeast of the village is of the highest altitude (188 m). Despite of mountains and hills in its peripheral, Yantian is blessed with vast plain in the middle, covering 60% of its land. That is to say, Yantian has a plain area of 14.4 km$^2$, with the

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$^3$ 15 mu is equal to 1 hectare.
remaining 40% being low mountains and hills. Two rivers run through Yantian – one is Dongshen River supplying fresh water to Hongkong via Shenzhen; the other is Shuibei River originating in Pinghu Town of Longgang District of Shenzhen not far from Yantian, and joining Dongshen River finally within the village. The rivers render adequate water supply to industrial and agricultural production, as well as livelihood in Yantian.

Yantian is an administrative village and consists of nine natural villages, which are the nine villagers groups – Dongyi, Donger, Nanfang, Xifang and Beifang in the village center, as well as Buxin, Shuibei, Shijie, and Changbiao in the periphery of the village (Figure 2). Buxin and Shuibei are located in northwest of the village, while Shijie and Changbiao in the south and southeast respectively. By area, Donger is the largest and Shijie is the smallest. By population size, Donger also tops the nine natural villages with over 640 people, and Shijie ranks the last with only 140 persons.
Figure 2: Nine natural villages of Yantian

In terms of land use, of its 36,000 mu \((24 \text{ km}^2)\) land, Yantian allocated 30% for
construction, about 10% for agriculture (mainly vegetable), and the rest of 60% for ecological protection and spare land. Specifically speaking, the construction land includes the land for building village resident houses (2,530 mu), industrial factories and workshops (4,560 mu), commercial facilities (210 mu), roads and transportation facilities (230 mu) and other public facilities such as public parks, schools, hospitals, village office buildings and so on (971 mu). The total agricultural land now is a little bit more than 3,000 mu, and 650 mu out of it has been using for vegetable plantation, and some of the agricultural land are not fully utilized now. The ecological or environmental protection land includes 9,070 mu land forsted, 2,500 mu orchard land, and 350 mu ponds for fishery purpose. The rest of the mountain and hill areas are not fully utilized, and some of the lands are currently spare land.

**History**

Yantian is an ancient village with long history and civilization. Back to Yuan Dynasty (1279 – 1368), few families had settled in Yantian. Quite a long time upon first settlement, Yantian was called “Peng Tian”, meaning deserted land with only sludge. Despite of meager land reclamation activities in Yuan Dynasty, the land was still barren due to limited labors. It was not until immigration of more families in Ming Dynasty, that the barren land took on a new look with green mountains, flourishing trees, clean water canals and well-planted farmland. Beautiful sceneries provide ideal habitat for wild goose. Each year a large number of wild geese migrate from the north after autumn equinox, have a nice winter here, and fly back to the north after spring equinox. For that reason, people rename “Peng Tian” as “Yantian” (“Yan” in Chinese here means wild geese) and the name has been using to the present.

**Population**

Yantian has two large groups of people: one group is represented by “Yantianer” or “Yantian natives”; the other group is represented by “Xin Guan Ren” (migrants to Dongguan). To put it simple, the first group refers to those with village membership of Yantian, while the second group represents those migrant workers in Dongguan (including in Yantian) with neither household registration (hukou) in Dongguan nor village membership of Yantian.

According to the household registration book of Yantian village we obtained from our survey in 2006, the total population with Yantian membership or the Yantian natives were 3,016 in the end of April 2006. This group of native Yantian people increased to 3,489 in 2008-end according to the official statistics of the village.

Accurate statistics of “Xin Guan Ren”, mostly migrant workers in Yantian, is hard to make. In general sense, figures can be developed upon hukou registration (household registration) statistics from the public security authorities. Unfortunately, official statistics significantly underestimates the actual number of this group of the people, as many of them do not register in the government authorities though they live and even work in Yantian for some times. According to the official report of Yantian, there are currently 70,000 migrant
workers employed in Yantian; however, policemen and village cadres told us that migrant workers numbered at least 80,000 – mostly young people who work for over 200 foreign funded enterprises or joint ventures in Yantian (there were around 400 such enterprises in the peak time). Some already settled in Yantian with spouse and children.

**Economy**

Historically speaking, Yantian is an agriculture-based village. In the planning economy time, grain output in Yantian increased from 1,400 tons in early 1950s to 3,000 tons in early 1980s. Like other areas in China, Yantian introduced Family Responsibility System with Remuneration Linked to Output or the Family Household Responsibility System (FHRS) since 1979, which pushed agricultural development to a new height. Dramatic rise was achieved for both grain output and total output value of agriculture upon the introduction of FHRS. The annual grain output in the village reached more than 3,000 tons in 1981 and 1984 respectively, the unprecedented record in the history of Yantian; the total output value of agriculture amounted to 1.07 million RMB in 1982, while the total value from agriculture was never reached one million before the introduction of FHRS.

Reform and opening up channeled large volume of foreign capital into Yantian, as evidenced by mushrooming so called “Three Supplied and One Compensation” companies (processing with supplied materials, processing with supplied design, assembling with supplied parts, and compensation trade) and foreign funded companies (wholly foreign funded companies, equity joint ventures and contractual joint ventures). In the peak time of mid 1990s, such companies numbered more than 400. With relocation of some companies and impact by current global economic crisis, there are 205 foreign funded companies left in Yantian in 2009. Economic structure of the village also changed rapidly from agriculture-based type to industry dominated type. Since the total industrial output value outgrew that of agriculture in 1984, agriculture added value only contributed a very small percentage to the village’s total; correspondingly, non-agricultural added value has gone up to a quite high level. Taking 2008 as an example, the total value added of Yantian was 5.5 billion yuan, and only 12.56 million yuan was from agriculture, 0.2% of the total; while the total value added from manufacturing reached 4.8 billion yuan, 87.3% of the total and 689 million yuan was from the service sector, 12.5% of the total. Lead position of non-agricultural sectors in the economy of Yantian is distinct. The total net profit of the village as a collective entity, reached nearly 200 million yuan, and per capita annual net income of the village was 16,838 yuan in 2008, which makes Yantian one of the better off villages in China.

**Evolutional Background of Education Development in Yantian Village**

As early as in Yuan Dynasty, there were already few families settling here in Yantian as we mentioned earlier. There was no formal education institution in the early history of Yantian.
Sishu appeared in Ming Dynasty in Yantian village as an important carrier of education. In the very beginning, families brought in teachers to teach their children. Later, several families of a clan put their children together for a class, which was then developed into a class for all children in the clan. Ultimately, several clans or the whole village mobilized resources from all channels to sponsor a school, while classroom was shifted from individual house to a dedicated public building. The formal school came into being in that way.

Just like in many other places in China, family-run Sishu dominated education services in Yantian in most time of Qing Dynasty. Sishu existed in several natural villages of Dongfang, Nanfang, Xifang, Beifang, Buxin, Shuibei and Changbiao. Normally there were a dozen of Sishu in an administrative village, each of which recruited around 20 students, thus delivering education service to over 200 students in total in the village. In the later Qing Dynasty, school appeared in Yantian (a nationwide campaign was launched to abolish imperial examination and set up schools) – Xiangsheng School, which recruited most school-age children in Yantian. There was no fixed rule for the length of school, but most students spent 6 to 7 years in Xiangsheng School, including 4 years of elementary education and 2 years of junior education, equivalent to the 6-year primary school at present. Yet students had to pass examinations to upgrade from elementary education to junior education.

In terms of funding sources, all expenses incurred by family-run Sishu were borne by specific families; if the Sishu was run by a clan, the expenses would then be shared between parents and the clan, where parents of the children would cover most of the expenses and the clan offered subsidies as appropriate from the revenue they gained in leasing the clan’s land. Parents gave the teachers a certain quantity of grain, or cash (silver) as their compensation. When schools were set up in the late Qing Dynasty, most of the operating expenses were already covered by the government. At that time, a school would get nearly 800 liang (1 liang is equivalent to around 50g) of silver yearly from the government, while funding gap was plugged by villagers.

Students were taught liberal arts in Sishu, without lessons in science and engineering. Lower grade students learned traditional classics such as Elementary, Three Character Classic, Hundred Family Surnames, One Thousand Character Primer, and Social Wisdom. Higher grade students were engaged in the Four Books – the Great Learning, the Golden Mean, Analects, and the Book of Mencius.

In 1932, in response to the call by 4 insightful people of the village, Yantian established

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4 Sishu was a kind of old-fashioned private school in the ancient time, being an integral part of private education, and distinguishing itself with government-run or public schools. As a non-government school unique to the Chinese context, Sishu boasted a long history of tradition. It appeared in Chunqiu Period. People often deem private lectures by Confucius in his hometown of Qufu as Sishu, which made Confucius the first renowned private teacher. As a form of private education, Sishu has been carried forward for over 2,000 years to be an organic supplement to the public education. It played an important role in disseminating traditional culture, and advancing education development. By sources of funding, Sishu can be divided into 3 types: 1). Zaoguan or Jashu where affluent families hired teachers to teach at their own house; 2). Cunshu or Zashu (Zongshu) where the villages or clans provided financial and property resources, recruiting teachers to teaching children of poor families; 3). Sishu or Menguan (Jiaoguan, Xueguan, or Shuwu) where teachers taught in their own houses and charged students for education. Sishu is often of small scale, with less than 20, or only several in some cases, students. Details can be found in http://baike.baidu.com/view/42498.htm?fr=ala0.
Zhentian School – a school named after ancestor of the Deng Family in Yantian (Deng Zhentian). The school was sited in the most densely populated section, covering a land area of 20 mu. There were 3 buildings – 2 two-story academic buildings of over an area of 400 m², 1 office building which also served as dormitory for faculty, 100 plus m². There were 7 staffs and over 200 students at the time, including students from adjacent villages and even other towns.

Funding of Zhentian School came from three sources: firstly, partial fund of “Taigong Fund” set up mainly upon revenue of the lime factory; secondly, friendly donation from some overseas Chinese; thirdly, contribution by parents of the students.

Zhentian School was forced to suspend during the anti-Japanese War period of time, which was later resumed in 1947 after the war. Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Zhentian School was renamed as “Yantian Primary School”. In the 17 years from 1932 to 1949, over 1,000 students in Yantian and neighboring villages graduated from Zhentian School, who later became backbones to supporting social and economic development in Guangdong Province, neighborhood areas of Yantian in particular.

Government took over the School in 1952, turning it into a public school. Yantian began to develop public school after 1949. In 1985 when a large number of foreign companies flooded into Yantian, demands grew as many business people needed to put their children into a neighborhood school. One businessman came to village cadres of Yantian, proposing to jointly build an elite share-holding school in Yantian, which later resulted in the emergence of share-holding education institution jointly sponsored by the village collective and private enterprises. At the same time, educational demands for children of migrant workers were growing dramatically as more and more migrant workers settled in Yantian. Consequently, the village collective mobilized some resources to build a dedicated school for children of migrant workers on the basis of Yantian Primary School. Later, the village collective established another school only for students with locally registered identity. Several private schools included, Yantian presented a networked governance of education services ultimately.

Public Schools in Yantian

Public schools refer to those where operating expenses are covered by government budget, and teachers are assigned and compensated by government. In the 40 years from 1949 to late 1980s, there were essentially no private schools in China. The government was more discreet in granting access to private actors to deliver the 9-year elementary education.

Upon liberation of Guangdong Province in October 1949, Zhentian School was renamed as Yantian Primary School. In 1950, the first year upon liberation, Yantian Primary School had 13 staffs and recruited 280 students. The School was subject to democratic management by School Affairs Committee (composed of principal, dean and representative of teachers); however, the School Affairs Committee was not acting independently, as all management
works in the School were conducted following guidance and coordination by the local
government education authorities (including government at county, district and town levels).
In 1952, the private school created by the Deng Family converted to a public one after being
taken over by the government, and was established as a 6-grade complete primary school in
the following year. It was a large village school, mainly financed by government budget,
with appropriate allowances from township government and village collective. The tuition
was rather low – each student only needed to pay 2 Yuan for miscellaneous charges
(textbook charges included). As the school was large in scale and quite successful, many
students from neighboring villages came here since the school was taken over by government
and became a public one.

“Cultural Revolution” in the mid 1960s waged fundamental changes to management
works of the school – the school was no longer managed by the School Affairs Committee,
but instead by the “Steering Committee of Cultural Revolution” established in the school.
Local poor farmers set up the “Dissemination Team of Mao Zedong’s Theory by Poor
Farmers”, which was stationed in the school, and supervised political campaign and teaching
activities. In such a system, the principal, dean and teachers had to take a step back and
enjoyed no say over management of the school. Second, changes spilled over from
management system to textbooks and teaching methodologies: textbooks were no longer
subject to consistent guidance from the Ministry of Education, but rather developed by local
government education authorities or even by individual schools; teaching courses shifted
from basic knowledge and theory to practices in agriculture, industry and medicine and
serving in the army; students went out of their classrooms to the fields – mainly to study
knowledge and techniques in growing sugar cane, peanut and rice, and farming swine and
fish, and directly engaged in production activities in the school-run farms.

In responding to the guiding philosophy of “shortening the length of school and
revolutionizing education” advocated by Chairman Mao (Zedong), Yantian Primary School
shortened length of school in 1970 from 6 years to 5 years, and began to deliver 2-year
middle school education in the village. Such practices last until 1983. Upon the death of Mao
Zedong in 1976, the “Gang of Four” was brought down, and school education was back on
the normal track in 1977. The “Steering Committee of Cultural Revolution” was revoked,
and “Dissemination Team by the Poor Farmers” withdrew from the school. Principal was
back to the central role of school management. Students went back to the classrooms to
study basic knowledge in relation to different subjects.

Collective economy of Yantian ushered into a new stage of rapid growth since late 1980s,
which led to dramatic increase in its economic strength. Consequently, the village invested
1.7 million Yuan in 1988 to upgrade Yantian Primary School. The upgrading project invested
1.2 million Yuan to build a faculty apartment building, and 500,000 Yuan in a four-story
teaching building with 25 classrooms. Again in 1993, the village collective invested 700,000
Yuan to build a small academic building, and 450,000 Yuan to purchase a number of
advanced teaching equipment and apparatus, upgrade sports facilities, and procure plentiful

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5 The four persons are Wang Hongwen, Zhang Chunqiao, Jiang Qing and Yao Wenyuan.
of books. To address transport difficulties of students in remote natural villages such as Changbiao and Shijie, the school arranged 4 shuttle buses to pick up students in those natural villages and also students of Yantian who were studying in the school of Fenggang Town.

Zhentian School, financed by the village collective and dedicated to children of local villagers in Yantian, was formally launched on September 1st 2003. As students with locally registered identity were transferred from Yantian Primary School to Zhentian School, the former became a dedicated school to children of migrant workers.

**Schools Run by Village Collective of Yantian**

Collective running of schools can be dated back to the late 1950s if collective is defined in a traditional fashion. Even if the school was sited in Yantian village, the owner was actually People’s Commune of Tangxia (which supervised Yantian Brigade at the time) instead of Yantian Brigade. Such schools were called as “Commune-run Schools” (mostly middle schools). Collective ownership of schools appeared twice in the history of Yantian. In the late 1980s as economy in Yantian was put onto a fast track, a genuine collective-run school by Yantian administrative village was established. Many changes have since occurred to macro-environment with reform and advancement of education system in China, which led to transfer of ownership back to the government in September 2006 – 3 years later upon foundation of the school by Yantian collective. Collective school, as an episode of education evolution, was recorded into the development history of Yantian.

The first trial of collective school was set in 1958, when the government advocated parallel progress between public and collective schools – actively developing collective schools (not private schools) while making bold progress in advancing public schools (run by government). At the same time, strong momentum of People’s Commune called for a more solid foundation offered by agriculture, and growing output of farm produce (especially that of grain), to foster steady development of agricultural production, grain production in particular. Human resources in agricultural operation, management and research were in great need. Consequently, the then Tangsha People’s Commune created a collective agricultural middle school in Yantian Brigade, which was known as Hongqi (Red Flag) Middle School. The School recruited students from production brigades in Fenggang area. In its first year, the School enrolled over 50 students, having Nanji Hall in Yantian as the classroom. The school was a full-time one, offering courses on Chinese, mathematics, geography and history, as well as courses on agricultural science and technology. Integrating classroom education, labor and research (practices) into a comprehensive curriculum, the School delivered basic knowledge on the one hand, and had students involved in agricultural production and agricultural research practices on the other. Nonetheless, after one year upon its foundation in Yantian, the School was merged into Hongqi Middle School in Tangsha in 1959 as the county education bureau reshuffled agricultural middle schools across the county.

The second collective run middle school in the era of People’s Commune was
established in 1965, also in response to the government call of parallel progress in public and non-state education and the guiding philosophy of “two education systems and two labor systems”. Fenggang People’s Commune created Yantian Agricultural Middle School in Yantian Brigade (Yantian was transferred to be under Fenggang People’s Commune upon its establishment). In its first year, the School recruited over 30 full-time students from different production brigades supervised by Fenggang People’s Commune. The School borrowed classrooms from barracks of locally stationed army, and delivered fundamental courses of Chinese, Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry, as well as agriculture-related courses and practices. The students spent half day in learning basic knowledge, and the other half in agricultural production or research practices. In two years upon creation of the School, the first generation of students graduated in the fall of 1967. The School recruited 40 plus new students after that; however, as students were later involved in the massive campaign of nationwide movement, the school was force to suspend, and never resumed since.

Given robust economic strength due to rapid development of collective economy in the late 1980s, Deng Yaohui, the Village Party Secretary of Yantian, proposed in 1988 to build a middle school by the village collective, to provide convenient access to middle school for children of the villagers, and more importantly, to generate talents pool for long term development of Yantian. Broadly backed by other village cadres and all villagers, the village collective invested over 6 million Yuan in 1989 to build Yantian Middle School in Poling inside Yantian Village. That was the first middle school in the countryside of Dongguan City not funded by the government, and thus called “Non-State Yantian Middle School” by many people. To put it in an accurate manner, Yantian Middle School was created by the village collective, not a private one in the common sense. Honorary Chairman of the School was Deng Yaohui, Party Secretary of Yantian Party Branch, while Deng Zhipeng served as the director of board, who was enrolled in Northwest Normal University from Yantian, and had long been engaged in education services (teaching in Guangzhou Normal University). There were 20 plus staffs in the very early stage of the School, mostly competent education practitioners recruited from different localities in Guangdong.

Yantian Middle School covered a land area of 150 mu. The village collective financed several constructions – 2 four-story academic buildings, 1 six-story faculty apartment building, and 1 four-story supportive building, with total floor area of over 10,000 m². The School was well equipped with library, reading room, physics and chemistry laboratories and audio rooms.

Except for some particular cases, Yantian Middle School only recruited local students of the village and children of staffs working in Dongshen Water Supply Project Management Bureau. The School ran 2 classes of some 70 students for its first year upon creation. In 2 years time, students of Yantian Middle School excelled in several disciplines. For example, a

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6 The guiding philosophy was put forward by Liu Shaoqi in 1958, who in 1964 again reiterated such an education system. The two education systems referred to full-time system and a system integrating classroom education with labor or farming; the two labor systems referred to full-time labor system and the system of half-time farming while half-time learning in the classroom. Schools subject to the latter system were called “farming and teaching school” in the countryside.

7 The name of a hill in the village.
A student of Yantian Middle School, obtained second award for Mathematics competition in Dongguan City and third award in the national Mathematics competition in 1991; a student from the school won the third award in the Mathematics competition of Dongguan City in 1993; another student won second award for competition in Chemistry competition of Dongguan City in 1993; the School itself was award by Dongguan City in 1993 as the “Outstanding School in Campaigning Biological Education” and “Outstanding Unit in the Scientific and Technology Campaign”.

While the Yantian Middle School was collecting its fame, Mr. Yang Zhimao, president of Maohua Property Company based in Guangzhou City of Guangdong Province, came to Deng Yaohui, the Party Secretary of Yantian Party Branch, proposing to build a private school on the basis of Yantian Middle School. His vision was to introduce advanced education concept and practices from abroad, develop talents to meet demand of the 21st century, and explore new orientation of education reform in China. Therefore, the school was named “New Century Talents School”. Consequently, not long since its creation Yantian Middle School took on a new face in 1993 as a backbone of the “New Century Talents School”, and was put on the track of commercial and market-oriented development.

The “New Century Talents School” is a shareholding school, recruiting students nationwide and charging expensively for its tuition. For villagers of Yantian, that is in fact not good news, as it costs more to have children in school. Despite of some allowances provided by the village collective, education was still costly. Moreover, children of Yantian villagers were sitting in the same classroom with those from other places, making it hard for the school to offer customized education services to local students. Village leaders then, upon discussion, decided to finance a new collective school only for local students. The new collective school carried forward an existing name as Zhentian School. Construction of Zhentian School last over 2 years from July 15th 2001 to September 1st 2003.

Zhentian School (Figure 3) is sited in the juncture of 2 villagers groups – Beifang and Dongfang, a comprehensive school including kindergarten, primary school and middle school. The School covers a land area of over 56,000 m², and floor area of 17,900 m², including 1 academic building (40 plus classrooms, 20 plus teacher’s offices, and over 20 laboratories, libraries and entertainment centers), 1 dormitory building for students and 1 apartment building for faculty (48 apartments). The library offers 25,000 books and over 200 types of newspaper and journals. There is also a stadium in the school with rubber-covered runway and diverse sports facilities. Construction of the School cost 35 million Yuan, fully funded by the village collective.

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8 Zhentian School has only middle school with no high school. Middle school graduates from Zhentian School may go to high schools in Fenggang Town. Some also choose the New Century Talents School in Yantian.

9 Not including the cost of land, or yearly incremental investment of over 2 million Yuan upon construction (the village collective has made additional investment of around 10 million Yuan from 2003 to 2008).
The authors learned that school leaders are also appointed by the village collective. While the school follows national rules in terms of development of teaching schedules and use of textbook, it is apparently a collective school in nature, which is founded upon investment and directly managed by village collective, and essentially service children of Yantian villagers. Nonetheless, Yantian villagers still position the school as a “village-run public” school.\(^{10}\)

When we conducted investigations in the school in June 2006, Deng Yinuo, dean of the school, told us that the school offered primary and middle school education, with 9 grades from Grade 1 in primary to Grade 3 in middle school and 2 classes each grade. All together, the school had 18 classes (12 in primary school and 6 in middle school) of 660 students. Apart from local students of Yantian, the school also enrolled children of migrants, most of whom contributed significantly to the reform and development of Yantian, including investors having their business start-up in Yantian, middle and above ranking managers in foreign companies, those having purchased commercial property in Yantian, and those used to serve in the army. Students of different backgrounds were subject to different tuitions and charges (including tuitions, charges on textbooks, etc): local students of Yantian (normal students) paid 240 Yuan each semester\(^{11}\) while immigrant students (transient students) paid 845 Yuan, 3.5 times of the former.

Zhentian School employed 80 staffs in 2006, including 57 teachers and 23 supporting staffs, who were directly employed and compensated by the village collective\(^{12}\) instead of by the government. The village collective was also responsible for organizing and facilitating

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10 The school is a public school in name, but actually run by the village collective of Yantian.
11 There are 2 semesters for each school year – spring semester and autumn semester.
12 It is understood that annual compensation for the teachers was around 50,000 Yuan on average.
administrative works of the school. That is to say, the school was essentially managed by the village collective.

In July 2008, Deng Jingzhong, the new dean of Zhentian School, told us that the village collective made a proposal to the government authority of Dongguan City upon 3 years since foundation of the school in 2006, requesting to transform Zhentian School from a village-run school to a government-run school, and shift the responsibility of management from village collective to the town government. As no public school in the countryside runs middle school, the middle school branch of Zhentian School would have to be abandoned if it was to be transformed. Consequently, the village collective decided to abolish middle school branch from Zhentian School in August 2006.

The rationale behind such transformation, as we presume, is to alleviate financial burdens of the village collective in running school. China rolled out a massive campaign of free-of-charge elementary education in the countryside since 2006, where all expenditures in rural elementary education are borne by the government. With such favorable policy in place, why would the village collective run schools out of their own budget? We learned from village leaders that the village collective put over 3 million Yuan annually to Zhentian School to maintain its operation. According to Deng Jingzhong, the number of students went up to 944 in 2008, each requiring a capita expenditure of 1,200 Yuan per semester. Expenses in equipment included, total cost of Zhentian School exceeded 3 million Yuan annually, most of which was actually borne by the village collective, supplemented by limited revenue from tuitions and charges (see Table 1). If the village collective handed over the school to the government, it will easily save around 3 million Yuan which was set aside for education in the past.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revenue from tuitions and charges (Yuan)</td>
<td>111,747</td>
<td>357,450</td>
<td>653,535</td>
<td>1,122,732</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investment by village collective (Yuan)</td>
<td>244,000</td>
<td>3,000,000</td>
<td>3,300,000</td>
<td>6,544,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others (Yuan)</td>
<td>1,753,000</td>
<td>521,141</td>
<td>172,342</td>
<td>2,446,483</td>
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Table 1: Sources and Use of Funding for Zhentian School, 2003 – 2006

13 The number of faculty was 85 in that year, including 65 teachers (33 public teachers).
14 Upon transformation into a public school, the school still receives 300,000 to 400,000 Yuan annually from village collective of Yantian as appropriate.
| Total (Yuan) | 2,108,747 | 3,878,591 | 4,125,877 | 10,113,215 |

Note: There was no budgetary support from government to Zhentian School from 2003 to 2006 to meet its financial need in terms of staffing, operation, construction and other programs; the funding need was satisfied mainly through investment by Yantian Village Collective, supplemented by tuitions and charges.

Among 944 students recruited in 2008, 123 students were local students with identity registered in Yantian, 223 students were categorized as “house-purchase students” (parents of those students don’t have locally registered identity, but purchased commercial property in Yantian), or “factory-running students” whose parents run factories in Yantian, or “contribution students” whose parents made special contribution to the development of Yantian; the remaining 598 students were children of migrant workers, who were often called the new generation of “Xin Guan Ren” (New Dongguan People). In 2008, Zhentian School charged nothing, but 6 Yuan per capita each semester for physical checkup, to local students, “house-purchasing students”, “factory-running students” and “contribution students”. In comparison, “Xin Guan Ren” paid 936 Yuan for tuition and textbooks each semester.

In terms of admission standard, local students of Yantian can be immediately admitted without examinations. Yet situation is different for children of “Xin Guan Ren” – they would have to go through strict interviews. If they fail in the interviews, they could only choose to go to Yantian School (the former public Yantian Primary School was transformed into a school dedicated to children of migrant workers, which recruited not only primary students but also middle school students, and thus was called Yantian School. Following section would be devoted to briefing Yantian School) dedicated to children of migrant workers. Apparently, distinct disparity does exist between local students, “house-purchasing students”, “factory-running students” and “contribution students” on the one hand, and children of migrant workers on the other, in terms of admission standard and charges.

In 2008, only a dozen out of 65 teachers in Zhentian School were from Guangdong Province, with the remaining from 10 other provinces or cities, mostly from Hubei and Hunan provinces. All of the teachers received professional education from normal colleges (universities). Half of the teachers once were awarded “outstanding teacher” (Youxiu Jiaoshi), while 20% of the teachers were awarded “master teacher” (Teji Jiaoshi). Those teachers were paid better in comparison with other teachers. For example, annual salary for primary and middle school teachers averaged 60,000 Yuan in Dongguan City and , and 70,000 Yuan in Fenggang Town, while teachers in Zhentian School could receive a compensation package of nearly 80,000 Yuan annually.

In interviewing some leaders and teachers in the school, we detected several weak links of the school in its development course: 1). Limited autonomy. Teachers of the school were mostly appointed by the villagers committee instead of by management of the school, thus some teachers were less competent; 2). While attaching importance to basic knowledge learning, the school paid inadequate attention to education catering interests of the students.
such as sports and arts. Infrastructure were also lagging, as students could not find venues for basketball, painting, chess and piano, and parents had to drive students to Shenzhen for those activities at weekends; 3) Distinct disparity, sometimes even discrimination, existed in many aspects against students from migrant families; 4) Some school leaders complained that they spent too much time dealing with red tape procedures, preparing reports and making presentations to governments at different levels. The school leaders and teachers hoped that the village collective could grant more autonomy to the school, and spare the school leaders from unnecessary procedures so that they could be better engaged in school management and academic activities.

In September 2006, the Governments of Dongguang City and Fenggang Town accepted proposal from Yantian Villagers Committee, and formally transforming Zhentian School from a “village-run school” to a genuine “public school”, putting an end to the history of collective schools in Yantian.

Upon transformation into a public school, Zhentian School further enlarged the scope of enrollment. On top of children of local villagers and the 3 particular groups of students (“house-purchasing students”, “factory-running students” and “contribution students”), children whose parents worked in local police stations and hospitals were also subject to equal treatment with children of local villagers. Economic burdens of the village collective were alleviated substantively, from about 4 million Yuan annually to around 500,000 Yuan annually.

School for the Children of Migrant Workers in Yantian

It was already known that Zhentian School, the newly constructed school dedicated to children with locally registered identity, was launched on September 1st 2003, which left an existing public school – Yantian Primary School, unused. Realizing that education difficulties for children of migrant workers was yet to be addressed, Yantian, in discussing with Fenggang Town Government and with approval from Dongguan City Government, decided to transform Yantian Primary School to a school dedicated to children of migrant workers (called as “Xin Guan Ren” currently), delivering education services to children of migrant workers (in 2003, there were still local children in the school; the number of local students dropped to only 1 in the 5th grade in 2005, and zero in 2006). Upon consultation between governments of Dongguang City, Fenggang Town and Yantian Village, the school was ultimately defined as a public school with non-state contribution, managed by Culture & Education Office of Fenggang Town on behalf of the government. The first school dedicated to children of Xin Guan Ren (i.e. migrant workers) in Fenggang Town thus appeared in Yantian, and Yantian Primary School was renamed as Yantian School. At present, Yantian School covers a land area of 174,000 m², with 3 academic buildings (including offices for the teachers), 3 faculty apartment buildings, library (with 27,000 books) and computer room (with 60 computers).

Being a public school, as we understand, means that the school will strictly follow
consistent plan of the government in educating students; more importantly, government needs to provide necessary funding to support operation of the school. In addition, Yantian village collective offers properties to the school free of charge, and some funding support each year. Non-state contribution means that operating expenses of the school are partially from private contribution, mainly tuitions and charges from the students.

In reality, the school charges pupils 885 Yuan per semester (including 210 Yuan for miscellaneous charges, such as textbook, physical checkup, and school uniforms), 1,770 Yuan annually; middle school students paid 1,400 Yuan per semester (miscellaneous charges included) in 2003 and 2004, and 1,600 Yuan in 2005. That is to say, a middle school student paid 3,200 Yuan annually. Take year 2006 as an example, the school had 6 grades (from first to sixth grade) with 6 classes each grade, 36 classes all together; there were 2 grades (seventh and eighth grade) with 2 classes each grade, 4 classes all together. In the whole school, there were 40 classes with 2,222 students. According to the tuition standard at the year, the school could receive around 5 million Yuan from students. In that year, the school only received 1.3 million Yuan from government and from the local collective – 1 million Yuan from Fenggang Town Government and 300,000 Yuan from village collective of Yantian. In fact, the contribution by Fenggang Town Government has been growing from 500,000 Yuan in 2004 to 900,000 Yuan in 2005. Given composition of funding sources, it would be more accurate to characterize Yantian School as a non-state one with public contribution.

The School was transformed into a complete public school in September 2007, where children of migrant workers enjoy same treatment with children of locally villagers. In theory, operating expenses of the school shall be fully covered by the government, mainly by town government; however, in reality, annual contribution to the school by the town government did increase to 1.8 million Yuan since January 1st 2008, but was still significantly less that what was needed. Tuitions from the students remained its main source of funding. According to the latest information we obtained, pupils and middle school students have been exempted from paying tuitions and textbook charges, except for charges for the school uniform as appropriate, since September 2009, the cost of which was covered by the town government.

In 2008, the school had around 100 staffs, including 83 teachers. 19 out of the 83

15 Standard length of school for middle school in China is 3 years; however, as the school has no qualification to issue diploma for middle school (it had once applied for such qualification, but was not approved by the government authority), and thus could not run ninth grade. Students had to find their own ways after the eighth grade – students from better-off families would normally study in the private New Century Talents School for the ninth grade; some went back to their hometown for ninth grade; some just gave up in ninth grade, and seek for jobs in the factories in Yantian.

16 Middle school branch of Yantian School was mostly filled with graduates from its primary school branch. Some students with outstanding school performance (around 2 dozens) chose to study in Huaqiao Middle School in Fenggang Town or the New Century Talents School after primary school, yet most students remained in Yantian School for middle school education. As Yantian School is a unique school, it can decide the proportion of pupils who were upgraded into the middle school. With constraints in teachers, classrooms, and venues, the school normally allowed some 50% of pupils to be upgraded into the middle school.

17 The number of students reached 2,400 in the peak, but declined in 2009. There were only 1,792 students in the spring semester, 60% of whom came from Guangdong Province, mostly from Shantou City and Chaozhou City. Only 10 students were from Dongguan City.
teachers were public teachers, while the remaining 64 teachers were substitute teachers. Over 56% of the teachers received profession trainings in colleges and above. 32% of the teachers had degrees from professional schools. Public teachers were paid by the government – around 70,000 Yuan on average in 2008; substitute teachers were paid by the school – around 50,000 Yuan on average in 2008, essentially from tuitions paid by the students.

Elite Shareholding School – New Century Talents School

It was afore mentioned that, the New Century Talents School (referred to as the Talents School hereinafter) is a boarding school developed on the basis of the collective-run Yantian Middle School. In view of a fact that public education services, especially quality education services, were in chronic shortage in Yantian, Fenggang, and even the whole Pearl River Delta, leaders of Yantian explored to tap the potential of private businesses to deliver better and diverse education services to children with different family backgrounds, while making progress in collective schools.

In 1993, Deng Yaohui, the Party Secretary of Yantian, reached an agreement with Yang Zhimao, chairman of Maohua Property Co. Ltd. based in Guangzhou, to jointly establish the Dongguan New Century Education Extension Co. Ltd, through which they invested to build a premium non-state boarding school covering education services from kindergarten to high school, namely, the New Century Talents School (Figure 4). The initiative was immediately endorsed by Government of Dongguan. As the Talents School was built on the basis of the former collective-run Yantian Middle School, the village collective decided to donate partial land and existing infrastructures to the new school. In its earlier time (1993), the School covered a land area of 35 mu, consisting of kindergarten, primary school and middle school. The middle school was upgraded in 1997, bringing in another 250 mu land and making total land coverage of the School reaching 285 mu. Total floor area of the School was over 100,000 m², of which the primary school occupied 45,000 m². Apart from classrooms and offices, the School was also equipped with 38 functional rooms such as libraries (with over 60,000 books), reading room, computer room, music room, arts room, laboratories and in-door playing field. Initial investment of the School (1993) was 120 million Yuan, and incremental investment of 60 million Yuan was made later (1997) on expansion of the middle school. Total investment in the school was 180 million Yuan.

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18 Substitute teachers are contracted teachers, who sign contract of service annually with the school.
According to the agreement between village collective of Yantian and Maohua company, village collective of Yantian held 30% of the shares in the New Century Education Extension Co. Ltd when they jointly built the school in 1993, calculated upon land value and tangible and intangible assets of the former “Yantian Middle School”. Yang Zhimao took the remaining 70% of the shares. Deng Yaohui, Party Secretary of Yantian Party Branch, served as the chairman of the company, while Yang Zhimao was the vice-chairman. The school introduced principal accountability system under the guidance of the chairman, namely, board of directors appointed members of the School Affairs Committee, and provided instructions on their works. The Board recruited a number of professionals, instead of local villagers in Yantian, to serve as managers of the school. For example, the first principal Hu Bailiang, vice principal Chen Xinwu and Zhang Guihe were all from outside Yantian, who have long been engaged in education sector.

The Talents School was formally launched on September 1st 1994, recruiting students and teachers from across the country. As it was a non-state shareholding school, there was neither investment nor allowance from the government. All the financial needs of the school were covered by the company or through tuitions. At that time, the Talents School charged parents for reserve fund, in order to meet financial need for its development. Specific practices were as follows:

1. Starting from September 1st 1994, parents paid 200,000 Yuan, 180,000 Yuan and 150,000 Yuan for a reserve fund to send their children to primary school, middle school and high school of the Talents School in respective.

2. The reserve fund would be subject to use by the Talents School (and the company
underpinning the school) before students graduated from high school. Upon students graduation from the high school, the Talents School returned principal money to the parents, but not the interest.

3. Apart from contributing to the reserve fund, students paid tuitions and other charges according to different stage of schooling and the use of accommodation facilities. The kindergarten recruited 30 students per class. Day children paid 4,000 Yuan per semester while boarding students paid double at 8,000 Yuan. In primary school, there were 40 pupils each class, all boarding ones. Students paid 8,800 Yuan per semester from first to third grade, and 9,300 Yuan per semester from fourth to sixth grade. In the middle school, there were 35 to 40 students in each class, 80% of whom were boarding students. Boarding students paid 9,000 Yuan per semester (meal expenses not included), in comparison with 3,800 Yuan per semester for day students; however, students with outstanding school performance (only 90 from Fenggang Town each year) could enjoy preferential treatment – 1,050 Yuan per semester. There were two types of high school students: one type was public students, namely students recruited according to the consistent recruitment plan developed by Dongguan City; the other type was non-state students, namely those recruited beyond government plan. Often, the two types of students equally in number. Public students paid 1,150 Yuan per semester, and a lodging fee of 225 Yuan; in comparison, non-state students recruited beyond government plan, except for the 40 students with outstanding performance (120 non-state students recruited annually) who only paid 6,000 Yuan per semester (miscellaneous charges not included), paid 9,000 Yuan per semester. There were 45 students in each class of the high school.

4. Local students of Yantian, whatever stage they were in, only paid 3,000 Yuan per semester; 2,000 Yuan of which were covered by the village collective and 1,000 Yuan by the parents; however, the village stopped paying the 2,000 Yuan since 2007, yet the school offered a tuition cut of 500 Yuan per semester for local students of Yantian, as well as for “house-purchasing students”, “factory-running students” and “contribution students”.

While aiming to cultivate talents, Yang Zhimao and village collective of Yantian also hoped to grow the education company into a public listing one in jointly creating the school. In 1997 when financial crisis hit some Asian countries and regions, such hope of going public became quite bleak. Upon obtaining a lump sum compensation (it was said to be 40 million Yuan or shares of equivalent value), village collective of Yantian withdrew from the company, which then turned into a private education comply wholly owned by Yang Zhimao. Subsequently, a policy issued by Guangdong Government in mid 1999 brought a big change. In preventing emergence and spread of Asian financial crisis in China, Guangdong government requested that all non-state schools charging for education reserve fund shall return contributions to the parents, and in future charge the reserve fund by year as appropriate instead of asking for lump sum payment. Following the call of Guangdong Government, the Talents School returned contributions to the parents, and changed the practices into charging by year ever since.

According to Mr. Guo, dean of the school, the Talents School achieved a financial
balance in 2007. In specific, revenue from tuitions and charges totaled nearly 30 million Yuan in 2007, while cost incurred per student was 12,000 Yuan without depreciation (14,000 Yuan including depreciation). Primary school and middle school earned some profit; yet kindergarten and high school suffered from a deficit. In general, the Talents School was in a breakeven situation.

The School was quite popular. In its first year (1994), the School recruited over 1,400 students, and 400 plus staffs from across the country, including some 180 teachers. Later, the number of students went up to 2,200, including over 50 foreign students (mainly from Korea). In its earlier time, the School received students mostly from Dongguan City, and some from nearby Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Huizhou and other cities. In addition, the School recruited over 100 students from Hongkong, Macao, Taiwan and Korea. At present, composition of students witnessed dramatic changes – only 10% from Dongguan City, and over 80% from “Xin Guan Ren” families such as successful businessmen and contractors of construction projects. Not many children of local villagers studies in the Talents School. In 2006, only 31 out of 719 pupils (from first grade to sixth grade) were children of local villagers, only 4.3%. There were 21 classes in the primary school, 1.5 local students per class.

The Talents School had 401 staffs in 2007, including 220 teachers (100 teachers for middle school, 75 for primary school and 45 for kindergarten) and 181 supporting staffs (including security, chef, and logistics personnel). 90% of the teachers were from other provinces, and only 10% were from Guangdong Province. Most teachers outside Guangdong were from Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi and Heilongjiang. In terms of qualification, primary school teachers shall have diploma in education from college and above; middle school teachers shall at least have bachelor degree in education, and kindergarten teachers must have received professional trainings. All staffs in the Talents School were recruited on a contract basis, thus many staffs, most teachers in particular, still had their formal affiliations registered in their hometown. Some of them transferred their files formally to Dongguan Talents Center. Some teachers came to the Talents School after retirement so as to earn some additional money. It is understood that, average annual compensation was around 30,000 Yuan in kindergarten, 55,000 Yuan in primary school, over 60,000 Yuan in middle school and over 70,000 Yuan in high school.

Teaching philosophy of the Talents School also changed from time to time. In its earlier time, the Talents School aimed at realigning itself with best practices in the world, cultivating talents for the 21st century, and exploring a new pathway for education reform in primary and middle school; by 2001, the school put forward a new concept of “people-centered, personality-customized, quality and efficiency”. Later, the School began to explore education targeting children of the affluent families in response to characteristics of the students.

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19 Students from Hongkong, Macao, and Taiwan paid tuitions at the same standard with domestic students, while Korean students paid at a higher standard.
The Talents School has been quite successful in the past 15 years since it was jointly built by a private company with village collective (later became wholly owned by the private company) – in 1995, Kuang Hongbin, Wang Lei, and Ye Liang, pupils of the School, won first, second and third award in the national “New Century Olympic Computer Competition”; in the following year, Deng Chuangying, a student of the middle school, won the first award in Guangdong Physics Competition Among Middle School Students and the third award in the national competition for physics among middle school students; Deng Chuangying and her classmate Deng Shaozhen also won the third award in the national competition for Chemistry among middle school students in the same year. In 1997, 17 paintings of 17 students from the Talents School were awarded outstanding paintings of Guangdong Province, of which 2 students (Liao Yingying and Deng Yuehui) won the first award and a number of students won the third award and encouragement award. In 1999, apart from 9 students who pursued further study overseas, 40 out of the 43 students (93%) who took part in the college entrance examination had registered a score higher than threshold for admission into universities in Guangdong. In 2003, the Talents School was awarded one of the “Top Ten Private Schools in Guangdong Province”, and “Model School for Ethics and Moral Education among Primary and Middle Schools Nationwide”.

Private Primary Schools Financed by Individuals

An important message popped out in the interviews with leaders and teachers of Fenggang Town and Yantian Village – demand for education is robust in Yantian Village and Fenggang Town, quality education in particular. Take Fenggang Town as an example, local population (those with registered identity in Fenggang, or those who have Fenggang hukou people) only numbered slightly over 20,000; however, population of migrants reached over 500,000. Public schools were planned according to the locally registered population, which naturally excluded those whose identities or hukou were not registered locally. Migrant workers would have to resort to private schools for delivering education to their children. In the case of Fenggang Town, the planned public education system could only accommodate 8,000 students based on its 20,000 locally registered population. 20,000 children of the 500,000 migrants (many migrants left their children at home for education – the so called “left-behind children”) had no access to public education system in Fenggang Town, and had to look for other means of education services. The situation in Yantian is largely the same with Fenggang. In fact, the situation is quite common in the Pearl River Delta – an inevitable phenomenon arising from economic and social transformation in China. In that context, private schools tapping the potential of individual resources, for a long time, remain an objective need, which is not only rational but also positive.

While the government introduced preferential policies to increase spending in public education, and village collective of Yantian made more investment to advance collective education and explore education companies by joining resources with private businesses, the development of private schools were not waning; instead, private school demonstrated strong momentum for development.
Private schools appeared in Yantian in the 1990s, and have been growing in response to the soaring demands for education. To introduce up-to-standard management over those schools, the Town Government of Fenggang launched in 2006 a formal test targeting all private schools in Yantian. Those who survived the test were issued with operating license; those who failed in the test were requested to meet the standard within a defined period of time; if they could not live up to the standard by the deadline, the schools would then be closed off. Upon such texts, the number of private schools in Yantian plummeted – only 4 private primary schools and 8 private kindergartens at present.

**Private Primary Schools**

In 2006, private primary schools certified by the town government included *Caihua* (Brilliance) Primary School, *Yinxing* (Silver Star) Primary School, *Deli* Primary School and *Kanglong* Primary School. According to the village leaders, those private schools had same tuition standard, as they needed to follow the tuition standard provided by Dongguan City – around 750 Yuan per capita each semester. That is to say, a student paid around 1,500 Yuan per year. Consequently, the schools tried to recruit more students while curbing the cost, in order to make a profit. All those schools recruited children of migrant workers; in fact, none of the children of local villagers studies in those schools.

*Caihua* (Brilliance) Primary School existed before 2006, which was founded by Fang Xingguo – a businessman from the other province out of Guangdong. Mr. Fang built *Caihua* Primary School on a rented private property with his own capital. The school hosted around 600 students when we conducted surveys in Yantian in 2009. According to the village cadres, the number of students is declining from its peak, so is the profit; however, the school still runs with positive balance sheet.

*Yinxing* (Silver Star) Primary School was founded by Gu Hansi – a businessman also from another province out of Guangdong in 2004, and obtained license from town government in 2006 upon its compliance test. The school has 800 students from Grade 1 to Grade 6 when we conducted surveys in Yantian in 2009.

*Deli* Primary School and *Kanglong* Primary School represented large schools created by migrant businessmen in Yantian. 800 plus and over 700 students were enrolled in fall semester 2008 in *Deli* and *Kanglong* respectively. The two schools offer courses from Grade 1 to Grade 6. Adjacent to each other, the 2 schools compete fiercely in all aspects. Chen Hanze, founder of *Deli*, has long been intending to acquire *Kanglong*. Upon rounds of consultation with founder of *Kanglong*, *Deli* ultimately purchased *Kanglong* in October 2008 with private capital of Chen Hanze. It is said that Mr. Chen made a lump sum cash payment of over 1 million Yuan to the founder of *Kanglong*, who consequently completely quit from *Kanglong*. The two schools, upon merge, became one.

**Private Kindergartens**
Private kindergartens greatly outnumber primary schools in Yantian. A random walk in the village may encounter several private kindergartens. Given much higher tuition, a kindergarten is often much more profitable than a primary school. Generally speaking, parents need to pay at least 2,000 Yuan to send their children to the kindergartens, sometimes more than 3,000 Yuan for better ones. Like what they did for primary schools, Town Government of Fenggang conducted in 2006 a comprehensive test and evaluation of all kindergartens in Yantian. Private kindergartens surviving in the evaluation were issued license, while those who failed in the evaluation were closed off.

Upon evaluation and re-registration, large-scale private kindergartens in Yantian now include New Century Talents Kindergarten, Tongyu Kindergarten, Tongxin Kindergarten, Yinxing Kindergarten, Kanglong Kindergarten, Jinxing Kindergarten, and Jinyaolan Kindergarten. Some companies, to alleviate concerns of their employees in taking care of the children, financed to build their own kindergartens, such as Jiali Kindergarten established by Jiali Group.

**New Century Talents Kindergarten** is an integral part of the New Century Talents School. After Yantian withdrew its share from the New Century Talents School, the New Century Talents School and New Century Talents Kindergarten are now the backbones for private education business of Mr. Yang Zhimao, a businessman. This kindergarten started to recruit children in 1994, with 1 infant class, 3 classes for 3/4-year-old, 3 classes for 4/5-year-old, and 3 classes for 5/6-year-old. All together, there are 10 classes with 30 children each and 350 children in total. The kindergarten charges 3,300 Yuan per semester. Over the years, the kindergarten has been running well, and is now the best kindergarten in Yantian.

**Tongyu Kindergarten** was a public one, which supported the earlier Yantian Primary School, and thus was named as “Kindergarten for Yantian Primary School”. In 1997, the kindergarten was contracted to local villagers – Deng Heling and his wife, and gradually became a private kindergarten. The kindergarten was also relocated from nearby Yantian Primary School to the newly established Zhentian School. It recruited around 300 children each year, and charged 2,800 Yuan per semester.

**Tongxin Kindergarten** was jointly established by 3 migrants moving to Yantian in 2004, which enrolls around 300 children yearly and charge the parents 1,500 Yuan for each semester.

Founder of *Konglong* Primary School established a kindergarten in 2005 – *Kanglong* Kindergarten, which charges less at 1,200 Yuan per semester and enrolls nearly 150 children each year.

Founder of *Yinxing* Primary School also had *Yinxing* (Silver Star) Kindergarten built in 2004. In addition, there are other private kindergartens in Yantian – *Jinxing* (Golden Star) Kindergarten and *Jinyaolan* (Golden Cradle) Kindergarten. Enterprises also run their own kindergartens. For example, *Jiali* Group runs *Jiali* Kindergarten, enrolling children of its staffs. The number of enrolled children is not large; however, semester-specific tuition is...
The private kindergartens survive and develop fully through market operation. Similar to the situation for primary and middle school, people of different social status send their children to kindergartens compatible with their social status – children of local villagers went to New Century Talents Kindergarten and Tongyu Kindergarten, while children of migrant workers went to other kindergartens. Of course, tuition was a factor for consideration; however, recognition of social status played an important role in this process.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

Yantian is no longer a traditional village with its rapid growth and quick transformation. Influx of all factors, particularly immigration of labors and families from all parts of the country for business, work and farming, led to dramatic increase of population and consequently under-supply of many services – education service being one of them. According to village leaders, children of the migrant workers numbered over 5,000 in Yantian Village. According to the national plan of education, it is often the case that several administrative villages share a public school. Apparently, public school fell short of the education needs for Yantian, at least in the short term. The only way out, in that context, was to quickly increase supply through multiple channels, which naturally resulted in the current situation of diverse and networked education service in Yantian – a network consisting of public school, collective school, schools jointly financed by private investor and collective as well as private schools. Ultimately, 5,000 children of migrant workers were sent to schools. Moreover, quality of education for children of local villagers has been improving, instead of deteriorating. Diverse and networked education constituted an effective and successful way to address education challenges in Yantian, namely to improve the supply of education services.

At the same time, there were also some obvious weak links in the diverse, networked education governance in Yantian, the most critical one being disparity in education services – children with different family background were subject to greatly differentiated education services. Such differences were evident in many aspects. For example, students in the New Century Talents School were mostly from high-income families; Zhentian School recruited students either with locally registered identity, or from the families of influential investors who made significant contribution to Yantian; Yantian School had its students all from families of migrant workers. Because of that, the three schools witnessed strong unevenness in terms of infrastructures and facilities. By several standards in our investigation in 2006 – land coverage per student, floor area per student, copies of books per student and number of computers per student, figures for the New Century School were 146.7 m², 62.8 m², 31 and 0.3; 81.2 m², 7.9 m², 37 and 0.2 for Zhentian School; and 9 m², 5 m², 12 and 0.06 for

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Yantian School. The New Century Talents School was more than 16 times, 12.6 times and 5 times of Yantian School in terms of land coverage per student, floor area per student and number of computers per student. Nevertheless, in 2006 the New Century Talents School had 34 students each class, in comparison to 38 in Zhentian School and 60 in Yantian School. Yantian School was 1.8 times of the New Century Talents School in terms of the number of students per class.

Financial situation could also be illustrated with the information we collected through our field investigation in 2006. The New Century Talents School witnesses a total revenue of more than 7 million Yuan from tuitions and miscellaneous charges, while Zhentian School had a total revenue of over 4 million Yuan, including 3 million Yuan contributed by the village collective of Yantian. In comparison, Yantian School only received some 1.8 million Yuan. The New Century Talents School equaled with Yantian School in the number of students – slightly over 2,000, yet the former had a revenue 4 times the latter; Zhentian School only had less half of the students in Yantian, but operating expenses of Zhentian School were twice of Yantian.

There were also big differences in terms of teacher resources. First was in the ratio between teachers and students. In 2006, the ratio between teachers and students was 1:15, 1:12 and 1:28 respectively in the New Century Talents School, Zhentian School and Yantian School. Second difference was in terms of qualification of teachers. In 2006, the proportion of teachers with bachelor degree was 67.3% in the New Century Talents School, 45% in Zhentian School and only 8.1% in Yantian School. Moreover, teachers with bachelor degree were more volatile in Yantian School than the New Century Talents School and Zhentian School. Large disparity in revenue among the three schools was one of the contributors – in 2006, teachers were paid around 60,000 to 70,000 Yuan in the New Century Talents School and 50,000 Yuan in Zhentian School, in comparison with less than 40,000 Yuan in Yantian School.

It is apparently a historical progress in rural China to transform from exclusive public education delivery to a diverse networked education financed by multiple channels of resources. In the case of Yantian, contribution by rural collective organizations on the basis of administrative village and by private investment played an important role in plugging shortfalls of local education services; however, we came to realize that gradually achieving equitable supply of education services, while increasing education supply through networked governance, shall remain a major item in agenda for intensifying education reform in the next step. According to our field investigations, we believe better cooperation and closer ties between governments, collective organizations, shareholding companies and private investors, present a viable solution towards that goal. Among others, government coordination had a critical role to play in areas like Yantian, as the networked education governance structure in Yantian went far beyond delivering education services to children of local villagers, but became public products in nature. In that context, further investigation and exploration of a proper solution to that challenge are of great relevance to advancing comprehensive education reform across the country.