

# Supply of Public Preschool Education Resources in Guangdong Province, Problems and Suggestions for Countermeasures

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## Abstract

According to the development characteristics of voluntary universal prekindergarten in Guangdong Province in recent years, the supply of public preschool education resources in Guangdong Province is analyzed and refined, and the problems such as insufficient supply of public preschool education resources and lack of quality inclusive private preschool education resources are found in Guangdong Province. Based on this, it is proposed to strengthen the coordination of departments, establish the preschool education joint conference system, increase financial input, improve the preschool education guarantee mechanism, and take multi-channel measures to solve the problem of insufficient supply of public preschool education resources. According to the development characteristics of voluntary universal prekindergarten in Guangdong Province in recent years, the supply of public preschool education resources in Guangdong Province is analyzed and refined, and the problems such as insufficient supply of public preschool education resources and lack of quality inclusive private preschool education resources are found in Guangdong Province. Based on this, it is proposed to strengthen the coordination of departments, establish the preschool education joint conference system, increase financial input, improve the preschool education guarantee mechanism, and take multi-channel measures to solve the problem of insufficient supply of public preschool education resources.

## Keywords

Supply-Side Reform, Public Preschool Education Resources, Voluntary Universal Prekindergarten, Guangdong Province

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## 1. Introduction

At present, inclusive pre-school education, as a focus issue in the field of social economy and education, has become a hot topic in the reform and development of preschool education in our country. “Conducting pre-school education to achieve children’s education” is a major decision and deployment made in the report of the 19th National Congress of the Party, and a major livelihood project for the Party and the government to do practical things for the broad masses of the people. In Guangdong Province, which is the largest economic province in China, the insufficient supply of inclusive pre-school education resources (especially public pre-school education resources) is the bottleneck restricting the development of education, especially pre-school education in Guangdong Province. In this paper, according to the national and Guangdong Province’s work deployment for the development of preschool education in the new era, the relevant situation of “deep research” and the general public response to the problems of “it is difficult to enter public kindergartens” and “it is expensive to enter high-quality private kindergartens”, this paper explores the realistic dilemma of the supply side of public preschool education resources from the supply situation of public preschool education resources, so as to explore the solution path of supply-side reform.

## 2. Supply of Public Preschool Education Resources in Guangdong Province

To run preschool education well and realize “education for young children” reflects the great importance attached to preschool education by the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as the core. After the 19th Party Congress, in November 2018, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued the “Opinions on the deepening reform and standardized development of preschool education”, which is the first important document for preschool education issued in the name of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council since the founding of New China, clearly proposing to firmly grasp the basic direction of preschool education for the public good and for the benefit of all, and to basically build a broad coverage, basic protection and quality preschool education by 2020, Quality preschool education public service system, to achieve voluntary universal prekindergarten coverage (the proportion of children in public and inclusive private kindergartens) to 80%, of which the proportion of children in public kindergartens in principle to 50%. To promote the implementation of the above goals, the central government has increased financial investment, arranging 15 billion and 16.85 billion and 18.840 billion yuan of special funds for preschool education development in 2018-2020, respectively, and in 2020 alone, a total of 56.045 billion yuan of funds will be invested in “supporting preschool education development funds” to support the national More than provinces (autonomous regions and municipalities) pilot, focusing on strengthening the construction of kindergarten buildings to increase voluntary universal prekin-

dergarten resources. Since 2011, Guangdong Province has promoted the implementation of three preschool education action plans, with the gross enrollment rate of preschool education continuously increasing, public welfare and voluntary universal prekindergarten resources further expanding and the quality of preschool education steadily improving. 2018-2020, the provincial finance has arranged a total of 2.979 billion yuan of preschool education development funds, including 1.329 billion yuan in 2020. The government will focus on supporting the expansion of voluntary universal prekindergarten resources in less developed areas. Since 2010, when the State Council promulgated the “Ten National Articles”, Guangdong Province has promoted the implementation of three phases of preschool education action plans, issued the “Guangdong Province Action Plan for Promoting the Inclusive and Healthy Development of Preschool Education”, “Opinions of the General Office of the Guangdong Provincial People’s Government on Increasing the Supply of Kindergarten and Primary and Secondary School Places and Quality Education Resources”, “Guangdong Province Opinions on Strengthening the Construction and Management of Kindergartens in Residential Areas”. The Guangdong Provincial Government has issued important documents such as the “Guangdong Province Action Plan for Promoting the Healthy Development of Preschool Education for All”, the “Guangdong Provincial People’s Government General Office Opinions on Increasing the Supply of Kindergarten Places and Quality Education Resources for Primary and Secondary Schools”, the “Guangdong Province Opinions on Strengthening the Construction and Management of Kindergartens in Residential Areas”, the “Guangdong Province Measures for the Identification, Support and Management of Private Kindergartens for the Benefit of All”, the “Guangdong Province Work Plan for the Governance of Kindergartens in Urban Areas”, and the “Implementation Opinions on Deepening Comprehensive Reform of Education and Promoting the High-Quality Development of Basic Education”. The quality of preschool education preservation and education has been steadily improved. By the end of 2018, the gross enrollment rate of preschool education in the province reached 112.46%, 17.77% higher than in 2013. The number of kindergartens reached 18,953, 5,160 more than in 2013, an increase of 37.41%. The total number of children in kindergarten reached 4,491,100, an increase of 945,400 over 2013, or 26.66%. The number of kindergarten staff reached 549,900, up 213,200 from 2013, an increase of 63.34%, and the ratio of students to staff increased from 9.49:1 in 2013 to 8.17:1. The number of full-time kindergarten teachers reached 292,900, up 104,700 from 2013, an increase of 55.62%. The number of children in public kindergartens reached 1,360,600, and the number of children in inclusive private kindergartens reached 2,045,000, with 30.29% of children in public kindergartens and 75.83% of children in voluntary universal pre-kindergartens. And after three phases of preschool education action plan, by the end of 2020 in Guangdong Province, there are 20,747 kindergartens, 1794 more than in 2018, an increase of 9.46%; the total number of children in kindergarten reached

4,810,700, an increase of 319,600 than in 2018, an increase of 7.11%; public kindergartens reached 7123, the number of children in public kindergartens reached 2,481,200. In addition, the number of children in private voluntary universal pre-kindergartens reached 2,089,200, and the number of children in public kindergartens reached 51.58%, an increase of 21.32 percentage points over 2018; the number of children in voluntary universal pre-kindergartens reached 86.70%, an increase of 10.87 percentage points over 2018, successfully achieving the “5080” goal. The goal of “5080” was successfully achieved. Although the development of preschool education in Guangdong Province has been rapid in recent years, due to the late start of the development of voluntary universal prekindergarten, a thin base, a lot of debts, a weak foundation, a large number of children, the school system to be improved, coupled with the “two-child wave” overlap and other reasons (Liang & Xu, 2021), population continues to inflow, the demand side of the boom on the supply side of the huge pressure, resulting in a long way to go. The balance of the supply of voluntary universal prekindergarten is still a long way off.

### **3. Problems in the Supply of Public Preschool Education Resources in Guangdong Province**

Although the development of preschool education in Guangdong Province has been rapid in recent years, due to the late start of preschool education development, thin foundation, many debts, weak foundation, a large number of children, the school system to be improved, coupled with the “second child wave” and other reasons, compared with developed provinces and cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Jiangsu, preschool education is still the largest shortage in the provincial education system in Guangdong Province. The biggest shortage faces many difficulties. “It is difficult to enter public kindergartens and expensive to enter high-quality private kindergartens,” has become a hot topic of concern. The main areas of concern are as follows:

1) Insufficient supply of public preschool education resources. In recent years, although Guangdong Province has formulated a series of policies to vigorously promote the development of inclusive pre-school education and strive to improve the supply of public preschool education resources, public preschool education resources are still difficult to meet the actual needs of the masses. For instance: a) Insufficient supply of public school places. In 2018, there were 18,953 kindergartens, and only 4989 public schools, accounting for 26.32%; 4,491,100 children were in school, and 1,360,600 children were in public schools, accounting for 30.29%. Among the public kindergartens, only 3337 are really run by the government and government departments, and the others are run by collectives and enterprises. 2015 to 2018, the province’s kindergartens increased from 16,368 to 18,953, an increase of 15.79%; public kindergartens grew from 4785 to 4989, an increase of only 4.26%, and the proportion of public kindergartens fell from 29.23% to 26.32% to 26.32%. b) The level of staffing security for public

kindergartens is insufficient. According to the statistics, there are 23,300 teachers on staff in public kindergartens in the province, and the ratio of children in kindergartens to staff is 8.17:1, however, the ratio of children in kindergartens to staff on staff is as high as 58.39:1. It is expected that by 2020, the proportion of children in public kindergartens in the province will reach more than 50%, and according to the minimum staffing security level of 1:10 in the “Standard for Kindergarten Establishment in Guangdong Province (for trial implementation)”, the approved staffing should be about 1:10. Calculation, should be approved staff establishment of about 136,000, the establishment gap is huge.

2) The lack of quality inclusive private preschool education resources. a) Insufficient support for inclusive private kindergartens. Although local cities and municipalities have carried out the identification and support of inclusive private kindergartens in accordance with the requirements of the state and Guangdong Province, it is difficult to improve the overall level of kindergarten operation due to the single means of support for inclusive private kindergartens, low support standards, and unsound institutional mechanisms, and the fact that kindergarten operation is mainly financed by the childcare fees. Compared with Beijing and Shanghai, Guangdong Province needs to improve its policies to systematically support voluntary universal pre-kindergartens. For example, Beijing supports non-profit private kindergartens by implementing tax exemptions, land rent reductions, financial subsidies, per pupil quota subsidies, rent subsidies, and subsidies for expansion of school places. In Shanghai, private kindergartens have been given an annual support of 200,000 RMB per year for three consecutive years, and 50,000 RMB per year for the purchase of teaching aids for private kindergartens at the third level. b) The quality of private kindergarten teachers needs to be improved. Private kindergarten teachers generally have the problems of “low certification rate, low education, low treatment and high turnover”, which is not conducive to the stability and development of the teaching force. However, most cities and regions have imperfect mechanisms to improve the treatment and attract incentives for private early childhood teachers (Liang & Lu, 2023).

#### **4. Suggestions for Countermeasures to Develop the Supply of Public Preschool Education Resources in Guangdong Province**

In the future, we will continue to adhere to the basic direction of preschool education for the public good and inclusive, combined with the national and provincial series of opinions on deepening reform and standardizing the development of preschool education, cracking the outstanding problems that limit the development of public kindergartens, vigorously develop public kindergartens, give full play to the role of the main channel of public kindergartens to protect the basics, cover the bottom line, lead the way, and flatten the fees, in order to meet the people’s expectations for a better education for young children.

#### **4.1. Strengthen Departmental Collaboration and Establish a Joint Meeting System for Preschool Education**

Currently, the core issues that restrict the development of public kindergartens are reflected in the planning and land use, the registration of kindergartens of public nature (collectively run), the establishment of public early childhood teachers, funding and other issues, involving multi-sectoral functions. We need to establish a joint meeting system of preschool education guided by provincial, municipal and county governments, with the collaborative participation of education, preparation, development and reform, finance, natural resources, housing and urban-rural construction, health and family planning units, and hold regular meetings to study and coordinate relevant work matters and problems in a timely manner.

#### **4.2. Increase Financial Investment and Improve the Guarantee Mechanism of Preschool Education**

Strive to reach more than 5% of the financial investment in preschool education in 2020, and gradually reach and exceed the national investment level. Increase financial investment in preschool education, promote the construction and expansion of a number of new public kindergartens around the country, improve the mechanism of per capita financial allocation for public kindergartens, and ensure the sustainable and healthy development of public kindergartens.

#### **4.3. Actively Take Measures to Solve the Problem of Insufficient Supply of Public Preschool Education Resources**

First, to expand the number of kindergartens, strengthen the planning and construction of kindergartens. According to national and provincial standards for kindergartens, new and expanded kindergartens are built in urban residential areas, old city transformation areas, foreign population gathering areas, industrial gathering areas and other areas where there is a shortage of school places, making full use of vacant factories, rural public service facilities, unused school buildings in primary and secondary schools, etc. Public kindergartens are organized, and priority is given to the construction of public kindergartens in areas with insufficient public preschool education resources. Effective implementation of each township has more than 1 standardized public township center kindergarten; under the premise of reasonable layout, each street at least 1 public kindergarten; the size of the resident population of more than 4000 administrative villages to hold standardized voluntary universal prekindergarten, the size of the resident population of less than 4000 administrative villages set up sub-gardens or joint kindergarten.

The second is to turn the stock, to carry out special governance of urban community supporting kindergartens. Implementation of the "General Office of the State Council on the implementation of the urban district supporting kindergarten governance notice" requirements, in accordance with the "government-led, departmental linkage, local responsibility, according to local conditions, classifica-

tion, long-term governance” principle, focusing on urban district supporting kindergarten planning, construction, transfer, kindergarten and other aspects of the outstanding problems to carry out governance. In accordance with the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the urban district kindergartens that have been built in accordance with the provisions of the timely transfer of local education administrative departments to run into public parks or entrusted to run into inclusive private parks, public preschool resources should be given priority to run into public parks. Tianhe District this year will receive the new 18 neighborhood supporting kindergartens to open into a high-quality garden branch to implement the “Tianhe District Development of Preschool Education Phase III Action Plan (2017-2020)” clearly put forward in the “By 2020, the district’s public kindergarten in the number of children in the park accounted for more than 50%” of the goal, the strict implementation of “All new kindergartens and kindergartens in the community with the expiration of the contract will be run as public kindergartens”.

Third, heavy incentive, fully mobilize the power of all parties to organize public kindergartens. Clarify the registration and management of public kindergartens, public kindergartens that meet the conditions for registration and registration procedures for legal entities. Encourage support for the streets, village collectives, powerful state-owned enterprises and institutions, especially ordinary higher education institutions to hold public kindergartens, in order to provide convenience for the children of the unit’s employees to enter the kindergarten, while also providing inclusive services for the community. For the military discontinued kindergarten, to be transferred to the local government to receive, the implementation of localized management, to ensure that preschool education resources are not lost.

Fourthly, we will dig deeper and support the existing public kindergartens to expand classes and increase capacity. Through reconstruction, expansion, expansion of classes, opening branch kindergartens, improving the conditions of operation, etc., support the existing public kindergartens to expand the scale of enrollment and improve the capacity of supplying places.

Fifth, adjust the standard, scientific control of kindergarten access. Each county (city, district) according to the “kindergarten construction standards” and “kindergarten, nursery school building design specifications” and other standards to develop and optimize the district kindergarten standards, so that they adapt to the reality of the needs, to avoid the high threshold of kindergarten access and cannot open a new garden.

Sixth, attach importance to innovation, encourage local municipalities to explore the management mechanism of public kindergartens. At present, the important link that restricts the development of public kindergartens is the registration of institutions, should encourage localities to actively explore innovation to crack the institutional mechanism barriers. Shenzhen actively explores the mode of “setting fees” to hold public kindergartens, registering kindergartens as second-class legal entities, giving financial allocations for per capita funding,

employing staff in full positions, setting posts according to needs, and setting salaries with posts (Shenzhen Municipal People's Government, 2019).

Seven is to turn the idea to encourage the government to open public classes in inclusive private kindergartens through the purchase of services. Actively explore ways to enable the people to enjoy preschool education services with the same fees and quality as public kindergartens in areas with insufficient public preschool education places through the purchase of services, etc. Dongguan encourages and supports parks, town (street) governments to cooperate with kindergartens organized by private capital to set up public classes. Since 2018, the towns of Chashan and Songshan Lake have set up public classes in private kindergartens, and the difference in their premiums for enrolling in private kindergartens is subsidized by the town government to further increase public preschool education places and solve the demand for school-age children to attend public kindergartens.

## 5. Conclusion

At present, there is insufficient supply of public preschool education resources in Guangdong Province, especially the number of degrees in public kindergartens and the guarantee level of teaching staff in public kindergartens. There is a lack of quality inclusive private preschool education resources, such as insufficient support for inclusive private kindergartens, and the quality of teachers needs to be improved. Based on this, it is proposed to strengthen the coordination of departments, establish a joint conference system for preschool education, increase funding, improve the guarantee mechanism for preschool education, actively expand the increment, strengthen the planning and construction of kindergartens, transfer the stock, carry out special management of supporting kindergartens in urban communities, reincentivize and fully mobilize all forces to hold public parks. We will tap the potential of existing public kindergartens to expand classes and increase capacity, adjust standards and scientifically control kindergarten access and focus on innovation and encourage cities to explore the management mechanism of public kindergartens. In order to solve the problem of insufficient supply of public preschool education resources, the government should be encouraged to set up public classes in inclusive private kindergartens through purchasing services.

## Project

This paper is a youth project of the "13th Five-Year Plan" of Guangdong Provincial Philosophy and Social Science in 2019, "Research on the Construction of Voluntary Universal Prekindergarten Public Service System in Guangdong Province from the Perspective of Supply-side Reform" (Project No. GD19YJY04). This paper is the initial results.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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