

## 《Business boom or bubble?》

With the country striving to boost innovation and entrepreneurship, business incubators, or maker-spaces as they are known, that cater for start-up companies, have mushroomed in recent years. However, many of them are now facing a dilemma?

This is one of the country's state-level business incubators located in Tianjin. It came into service over 6 years ago. Now the industrial park owns an area of nearly 90 thousand square meters, that's bigger than 10 football grounds.

But staff here told us only one floor of the five main buildings in the park is open for use. And this is what you can see when you step onto that floor. A ghost town.

"There's still a few start-ups left, about a few dozen people. And not many of them are really working," said a staff member.

And this is another maker-space, located about 2,000 kilometers away in Southern China's Shenzhen city. Though more cosily decorated, it's a familiar story: the same empty chairs, and the same empty offices.

Guo Jiawen started his business five years ago, and has worked in 3 incubators like this.

"When starting a business, we may need different resources at different stages. What these incubators actually offer is not as attractive, nor as much, as what they promised at the beginning," said entrepreneur Guo Jiawen.

Expert guidance and training, initial seed funding, and office space, are some of the things these companies usually promise. But as many entrepreneurs found, collecting rent money turns out to be the only thing they really care about.

Generally, each workstation is charged a sum ranging from several hundreds of yuan, to over 1,000.

"I often receive calls asking if we need an office. That's what most business incubators provide, only office space," said entrepreneur Ding Yongqiang.

On the other hand, incubator bosses complain long-term investments and slow returns have led to lots of pressure.

"First the operation cost is very high. And secondly we are having a difficult time attracting investment. We are facing so much competition, as there are so many incubators out there," said Huang Jianhao, Head of Operations of Diku Makerspace.

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Meanwhile, a business insider has revealed that more than half of small-sized incubators in China are relying on financial support offered by government.

"Many of these incubators are following the trend, and, to speak bluntly, defrauding the government of financing money. According to my knowledge, small-sized incubators running in this way have exceeded 50 per cent of the total number."

Experts are calling for patience and more respect for entrepreneurs, as well as innovation-driven business.

