Charitable Schools as a Social Welfare Project in the Ming Dynasty

Johanna Lidén | ORCID: 0000-0001-9131-4176
Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden
johanna.liden@rel.su.se

Abstract

This article aims at discussing charitable schools in the Ming dynasty, which was one form of primary schooling beside the village schools. Focus is on their aims, founders, teachers, and students, as well as what is possible to infer from the material about the content of studies and the pedagogy. Furthermore, the relation between Neo-Confucianism and primary schooling will be discussed. Several well-known works have been written on the higher levels of education and the examination system, but lower levels such as village schools and charitable schools are still not sufficiently studied. In the present article, I argue that the charitable school as a school form is a part of larger charitable projects established by local officials to improve social welfare. The locations of those schools were not necessarily in rural areas as was the case with the village schools, but more often in urban areas. However, the aims were the same, that is, to transform poor boys into well-behaving and morally good adults and to make them literate, most likely in that order, that is, moral transformation first and practical skills next.

Keywords

charitable schools 义学 – village schools 社学 – primary schooling – pedagogy – Wang Yangming – Neo-Confucianism
Literary works on late imperial schooling in China often describe black pedagogy. The original concept is German (schwarte Pädagogik), and points to a pedagogy which is repressive and harmful, using psychological and corporeal punishments.¹ No matter whether Christian or Neo-Confucian schools, the connection between education and orthodox learning was indeed very strong. The writer Shen Congwen 沈從文 (1902–1988) describes in his autobiography how the brutality in the “small school” (or primary school 小學) of his family forced him to go out to the “large school” (大學) of the big world with its vibrating and fascinating life outside of the school walls. Shen Congwen studied at a family school (家塾) – or rather a clan school – which he escaped from as often as he could:

> When my truancy failed and it was discovered by my family or by the school, I was beaten by both. At school I had to take the bench myself and place it in front of the tablet of Confucius. Bending over it I was beaten [with a stick]. After the punishment, I had to bow in front of the tablet of Confucius and express repentance. Sometimes, I was punished to kneel during the time it took for a stick of incense to burn out.

Shen 1930 reprint 1984: 111

A similar situation is described by Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978). Already before Guo was born, the family ran their own family school and invited a family teacher, Shen Huanzhang 沈煥章, who was a stipend student. The first to teach Guo to read was however his mother, who taught him children’s poems (such as Pianpian shaonian lang 翩翩少年郎). That mothers took care of basic literacy was quite common in well-to-do families. In 1897, when Guo was four and half years old, his father made him study at the family school as the student of Mr. Shen. “I took a pair of candles, three incense sticks and in front of the ‘Tablet of the Greatly Sincere Sage and Former Teacher Confucius’, I banged my head against the floor”.² Before the third day at school was ended, he ran off. Guo says there was only one word for educating children and that word was “to beat”, “if you don’t beat them, they will not become men, beat them until they become officials”.³ Guo mentions that in the countryside, there was a special expression for learning to read and write, ‘to get a bull

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¹ For the term ‘black pedagogy’ see Rutschky 1977.
² Guo 1947: 33.
³ Ibid. 34.
nose ring’, metaphorically describing both the control of the students and the pain it caused. Like Shen Congwen, Guo describes how the children had to carry the bench themselves and place it in front of the tablet of Confucius. They had to undress and lie down on the bench, after which then the embodiment of Confucius, that is the teacher, started to beat their buttocks and other parts of their bodies. The question is, are those descriptions representative of their time, that is, the end of the Qing dynasty (1644–1912) shortly before the imperial system would collapse? And can we assume that the treatment of the students in primary schools in the preceding Ming dynasty (1368–1644) was the same?

The article will discuss the different concepts of ‘village schools’ (shexue 社學 also shuxue 塾學 and 鄉學) and ‘charitable schools’ (yixue 義學 or yishu 義塾). Although the concepts are not strictly separated in the Ming material, it is clear that the ‘charitable school’ is linked to a general charitable project of creating a welfare local society. The article further investigates the aims of village schools and charitable schools, the concrete issues of funding, teaching materials, who were the students and teachers, and teaching methods. Schools were an extension of the Neo-Confucian project to create morally good members of society. However, already in the Ming dynasty, ideas of what was good and how to achieve it differed. Wang Yangming, for instance, criticized the black pedagogy of his time, and argued for a freer way of teaching. At the same time Neo-Confucianism had developed in different directions and individual educators had their own views, so education of the time could be repressive as well as liberating. Therefore, the question of the nature of Neo-Confucian education cannot easily be answered. Neo-Confucianism harboured the black pedagogy but at the same time gave birth to its opposite.

Conceptual Issues

The most common type of school for primary education in the Ming dynasty was the village school (shexue 社學, also shuxue 塾學 and 鄉學). In 1375, the Hongwu emperor for the first time ordered the establishment of village schools in every prefecture, township, and county. In Changshan county that was translated into 75 village schools. This order was reiterated by his successors in 1436, 1465 and 1534. There were also family or clan schools (jiashu 家

4 Ibid.
5 Changshan XZ 1683: juan 5: 4b–5a.
and charitable schools (yixue 義學 or yishu 義塾). Sometimes all concepts are used as if they were synonymous. At least the terms yishu 義塾 and yixue 義學 had the same meaning.

Whereas village schools were established by the imperial administration, family schools were financed by a lineage. Lineage is usually regarded as a smaller unit than a clan, although the members of both had the same family name. The lineage consists of those who are connected four generations back to a forefather to whom the descendants sacrificed collectively. This means that the lineage formed a ritual unit. A village could consist of one or more families, which might also be organized as lineages. In contrast to family schools, charitable schools were usually financed by local officials who wished to make an imprint on local society. Benjamin Elman argues that local elites increasingly created charitable schools, some within but most outside of their lineages. He regards them as complementary to the village schools giving primary literacy to sons from poor families or poorer segments of a well-off lineages. We can assume that the numbers of village schools were insufficient, and that local officials therefore tried to fill the gap. According to Elman, lineage schools and merchant-financed academies became private possessions, and through school establishments local elites competed for “social, political, and academic ascendancy”. In Yangzhou, for example, academies were established by salt merchants for their sons. Buddhist temple schools fulfilled the same function as village and charitable schools. A difference between them was that the Buddhist temple schools also provided Buddhist studies for beginners.

The local gazetteers give the impression that the shexue were established in the villages and, thus, a more rural phenomenon compared with the charitable schools, which were mainly established in townships and cities. The latter are also sometimes mentioned together with private academies. In the northern part of today’s Wuhan, that is, in the Huangpi district, there was an “Academy of the two Cheng brothers” Ercheng Shuyuan 二程書院, dedicated to

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7 Changshan XZ 1683: juan 5: 4b–5a.
8 This is shown by the case of the Yanzi Temple (Yanzi ci 言子祠) in Changshu County, Suzhou. Yanzi was one of the main disciples of Confucius, known for his erudition and his deep knowledge of the Classics. In a 19th century compilation of the Sixteen philosophers and their schools, it is said that the Yanzi Temple in Suzhou was called “The Academy of Learning the Way” (Xuedao shuyuan 學道書院) and that besides this temple there was an yixue, which was called “South of the Road Charitable School” (Daonan yishu 道南義塾). See Shengmen shiliu zi shu ([1886) “The book on Yan Yuan” juan 3: 2 a–b.
9 On the lineage see Faure 1986.
10 Ebrey 1994: 221.
11 Elman 2013: 132.
12 Ibid. 131.
two prominent Neo-Confucian philosophers in the Song dynasty (960–1279). Beside the temple a charitable school was built.\textsuperscript{13} Also the political historian Hsiao Kung-chuan has noticed that village schools were built in the countryside, whereas charitable schools were located both in rural and urban areas.\textsuperscript{14} He further mentions that the aims of both school forms were essentially the same. The charitable schools were established for poor men, no matter if they were adults or children.\textsuperscript{15} Hsiao remarks that the terms \textit{yixue} and \textit{shexue} were used interchangeable but that \textit{yixue} was used more for ethnic minorities.\textsuperscript{16} His observation applies to the Qing period, which is different from the Ming, when \textit{yixue} were established mainly for the Han Chinese population. Schools set up in the border areas in the south were called \textit{shexue}, not \textit{yixue}. Xu Yue 徐樾 (?–1552), set up several \textit{shexue} in Guizhou.\textsuperscript{17} He was a follower of Wang Gen, who inaugurated the Taizhou movement that renewed late Ming Neo-Confucianism.\textsuperscript{18}

According to Sarah Schneewind, the \textit{shexue} goes back to the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), although the Ming founder Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (also known by the title of his reign: Hongwu 洪武) tried to suppress the Yuan connection by claiming that he followed even older precedents, contrary to the “infectious” traditions of the Mongols.\textsuperscript{19} In 1279, rural areas were organized into 50 families called a \textit{she 社} (community). Sixteen years later, that is in 1286, Kublai Khan ordered each \textit{she} to set up a school to teach the classics.\textsuperscript{20} In the Ming, the Hongwu emperor ordered \textit{shexue} to be set up, but not by the \textit{she} which no longer existed, but by the leaders of the newly established \textit{lijia} 里甲 communities which consisted of 110 or 100 families.\textsuperscript{21}

The concept of \textit{yixue} also has an older history. Dennis Twitchett mentions in his study “The Fan Clan’s Charitable Estate 1050–1760” that the Fan clan founded a charitable school in 1277 in Suzhou, which according to Twitchett is the first time \textit{yixue} is mentioned. Before this, the clan subsidized teachers, which might imply that they had a clan school. I suppose this continued even after the charitable school was established. The latter was financed by 150 \textit{mu}}
of land. According to Twitchett, the income from the land was used to cover the salaries of the teachers as well as expenses for rites. The teachers came from the clan. The students were not only children but also older students who came from places far away. Most likely they studied for the examinations. Twitchett argues that the aim of the charitable school and grants for education was to protect “the members against the possibility of losing their status as educated members of the literati class.” He does not draw a line between clan school and charitable school. Nevertheless, his study gives us the impression that the charitable school was an extension of the clan school. At least in case of the Fan clan, the charitable school was an exclusive family project and students from other clans were not admitted.

Taiwanese scholars have shown interest in the subject of charitable schools, their history, as well as funding. Liang Gengyao claims for instance that this kind of school is a private school, which gives scholars the opportunity to study for free and where they are provided food and housing, existed already in the Five Dynasties (907–960). According to him it became successively more common from the middle of the Northern Song until the Southern Song (1127–1279). As he points out, the Song author Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123–1202) is one of the first to make a definition of yi in ‘charitable schools’. In his collection of essays Rongzhai Suibi 容齋隨筆 he says: “when one talks about ‘charity’ with the people, one is referring to ‘charitable granaries’, ‘charitable society’, ‘charitable fields’, ‘charitable schools’, ‘charitable works’ (corvée), and ‘charitable wells’.” A gazetteer text from Zhejiang points out that charitable schools are set up for teaching children from far away. In the same text it is said that charitable drinks are when you provide tea water for travellers. This means that charity went beyond the clan.

As for the difference between yixue and shexue, Angela Leung finds them fundamentally different and that “the yixue was more genuinely a school of the community” since it was established by local leaders and not by the state (Leung 1994: 384). One gazetteer talks of the village schools as sanctioned from above while yixue are established locally, but that they have the same purpose, that is, to teach boys about Confucian moral values. William T. Rowe's study on the Qing official and educator Chen Hongmou’s 陳宏謀 (1696–1771)

22  Twitchett 1959: 122.
23  Ibid: 130.
24  Liang 1999: 177–178. It is, however, unclear what his sources are for such schools during the Five Dynasties.
25  Hong 1212: juan 8: 7a.
establishment of charitable schools in Yunnan 1733–38 shows that there was a critique of the village schools already in the late Ming (for instance by Lü Kun 呂坤 1536–1618) for ignoring the social education of children and instead becoming institutions for exam preparation. Rowe believes this critique was the reason why Chen Hongmou abandoned the term *shexue* and choose *yixue* instead.\(^{28}\)

In my view the main difference between the village schools and the charitable schools in the Ming dynasty is that the latter was part of a larger local welfare project. Usually, they were established together with other charitable projects such as granaries and graveyards. This was also the case during the Song dynasty. Linda Walton mentions that charitable schools were often established together with charitable estates. Sometimes they were even called “charitable-school-estate” (*yixuezhuang* 義學莊). It provided for a wide range of welfare such as food, clothing, funerals, and support of schools.\(^{29}\)

I found that the local gazetteers often talk about ‘the three charitables’ (*sanyi* 三義), and then it is those three establishments that are meant.\(^{30}\)

Beside ‘the three charitables’, there were other forms of charity activities such as boring wells, building bridges and digging ditches. The term ‘the three charitables’ appears frequently in local gazetteers and, therefore, we can assume that the charitable school was usually closely linked to other charitable projects. The information on the charitable schools is mostly placed in the sections on “schools” while other charitable projects are placed in the sections on “establishments” or “charitable deeds” in the gazetteers.\(^{31}\)

Nonetheless, they were originally conceived as one and the same project.

A typical example is Huang Lan 黃瀾, a philanthropist from Jiangyin county, in today’s Jiangsu Province, who established charitable schools, bored charitable wells, and established charitable estates. In the Zhengde reign (1505–1520) when there was a famine as well as an epidemic, he also distributed thousand bushels of rice, arranged five furnaces with gruel and distributed thousand coffins for the dead.\(^{32}\)

Most likely, “a thousand” here just means a lot. His activities show how charitable schools and other charitable projects belonged to the same undertaking. Therefore, I regard the concept of *yi* 義 ‘righteousness’, ‘charity’ as crucial behind the establishment of ‘charitable schools’. Why would they otherwise call them ‘charitable schools’? Joanna Handlin finds the term *yi*
“slippery”, but that is not unique for this term, it is in fact the rule for key concepts with multiple associations and connotations, accumulating new meanings during the history of their semantic development. A Confucian approach to the term yi is that it is one of the five Confucian virtues of humaneness, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and fidelity. The step from ‘righteousness’ to ‘charity’ is indeed not very long, since the righteous person helps those in need. Important to note is that yixue also has the meaning of “the learning of righteousness” in Confucianism, something which could be studied in a private academy. In Buddhism it has the additional meaning of “studying the meaning” or ‘exegesis’.

The charitable schools were established for those who did not have financial means to let their sons go to school. When the Hongwu emperor abandoned the village schools, “winter schools” (dongxue冬學) were set up instead. This solution prevented the school semester from interfering with the agricultural seasons. As elsewhere, parents who needed their children as cheap labour, perceived schools as a financial problem. Other parents did not see that the schools provided something that they could not contribute themselves and therefore considered them useless. As for the students, the schools might have been a torture chamber, but most boys probably regarded schooling as something which was hard to get and which they still hopelessly yearned for. Not to mention the girls who were not allowed to attend public schools. More privileged girls would receive family education, which usually meant working with sericulture and learning how to be a good wife. Courtesans were sometimes schooled from young age in literary skills, so as to be able to entertain their men not only with dances and music, but also by reciting poetry and discussing literature. However, there is no information whether such girls ever attended charity schools.

33 Handlin 2009: 7.
34 Other translations of the term yi are ‘being principled’, ‘duty’, and ‘moral obligation’. See Shirokauer and Hymes, 1993: 54.
36 Schneewind 2006: 16. On this type of school see the Yuan legal compilation Tongzhi tiaoge通制條格, juan 5: 80 (section Chuanxi chawu傳習差誤) with a detailed description.
37 Mann 1994: 19–49. For works on women as writers see Ko 1994; Idema & Grant, 2004. Those works have information on education for woman, but nothing on village schools and charitable schools, most likely because girls did not have access to such education but private teachers only. There are also several works on women’s literacy in traditional China. See for instance Rawski 1979.
The yearning for studies is described in anecdotal stories such as the following one which has the title “Gazing at a frog and asking for admission” (Du wa qiu xue 觀蛙求學):

He was a peasant boy. When he was young his father had him bring rice seedlings [to the field]. [One day] he trampled a frog to death. He told his father that he would not pull up rice plants anymore, ... but only wanted to study and become an official... His father thought his words remarkable but could not afford to invite a teacher. Then he travelled to [different] village schools and listened how they recited sentences. One day he suddenly came upon the idea to go for learning elsewhere. After walking for a while, he arrived at the town of Taicang. As he entered through a high gate a man asked him [what he wanted] and he answered that he wanted to borrow books to read. The gate keeper turned him down because he was a village boy. Just at that moment the owner sent off a guest and came out. He inquired and got to know what was going on. He then let [the boy] stay, and had a master teach him. The owner was [nobody less than] Wang Shizhen.

An anecdotal story does not necessarily give us reliable information on a particular case or person, but says something about a common situation. In this case, the existence of hindrances for children to access schooling. For village boys in general it was most likely as difficult as for the boy in the story above. The chance of meeting someone like the well-known Ming-scholar Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526–1590) was miniscule and that he would pay for someone’s studies even more unlikely. It is uncertain what the frog metaphor means here. “The frog in the well” story by Zhuangzi uses the image to describe a self-opinionated person with limited knowledge.40 One interpretation of this story would be that by killing the frog the boy destroys his own ignorance and transcends his lot as a peasant boy. However, there are also folk tales which talks

39  Zhu Renhuo, Jian Hu Ji, Juan 3: 4a–4b. 王鳳洲 Wang Fengzhou is the style name (hao 號) of Wang Shizhen.
40  See Ziporyn 2020: 140.
of trampling frogs to death, so it might be a common theme in popular literature. The story above expresses a yearning for studies and we might assume that this was a yearning which was quite common among poor boys (and girls) who wanted to improve their lives.

Besides being linked to other charitable projects, the charitable schools had an important similarity to the community compact (xiangyue 鄉約), since they both stressed ethical conduct. The community members signed an agreement (yue 約) of good moral behaviour. During the compact meetings scholars lectured on Confucian ethics; the members sang morally edifying songs and confessed sins. A jinshi named Cheng Huan 程寰, who became a jinshi in 1589, established charitable schools, granaries, bridges and implemented community compacts in Chongzhou County in Fujian. The same gazetteer (juan 126: 18a) mentions that a teacher was invited and that they built a “community compact hall” where they had community compact agreements and taught the boys in the charitable school. Thus, the charitable teaching might have taken place in the very same hall that was used for the community compact meetings.

The close connection between the Confucian tradition and schools can also be seen in the term ‘temple school’ (miaoxue 廟學). The idea was that students would study the Confucian learning in the Confucian temple (Kongmiao 孔廟 or Wenmiao 文廟); thus, a school was usually built within the temple complex. In the Pei County in today’s Jiangsu Province, a charitable school was changed into a Confucian temple. Even before this happened, this building was a location of worshipping Confucius. I will return to the close connection between primary education and (Neo-)Confucianism in the following sections.

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41 Another interpretation would be that it is linked to a folk tale from Guangdong. In this story there is a fish seller who meets a pair of frogs. They try to tell the man something, but he then threatens to trample them to death. After a while, the frogs talk to him, saying that they are his deceased parents and urging him to be kind towards human beings. After a while, the frogs talk to him, saying that they are his deceased parents and urging him to be kind towards human beings (Chen 1994, vol. 3 Guangdong: 190–192). The frog in this anecdote symbolizes the conscience as manifested in the parents who are reborn into a lower form of being.

42 Shaowu FZ 1619: juan 28: 4b.
43 For the community compact (also called community covenant), see Hauf 1987: 253–283, and Lu 1997: 116–172.
44 Minshu juan 1619: juan 63:15b.
45 Minshu 1619: juan 126: 18a.
46 Peizhi 1597: juan 10: 4b.
Aims of Schooling

There are many detailed descriptions of the higher levels of the educational system in contemporary research, especially the examination system, but we know much less for the local level and the villages. However, earlier research gives us some idea of the purposes of village schools. According to Erik Zürcher, the aim of education at large was to “select an administrative elite, but also to give ordinary people moral training and to manipulate them ideologically”.47 In his view, Confucianism tried to monopolize education at all levels, and its aim was to create a transformation of the whole human being. However, he points out that the same aim also applied to Buddhism although the transformation they aimed for was somewhat different. Ritual training and meditation praxis in Buddhism had a moral dimension, but ultimately it should set the Buddhist free “from entanglements of worldly desires and attachments”.48

Another aspect which is important to the discussion, is that “Confucianism" of the Tang period was not the same as Neo-Confucianism of the Ming. In the Ming, the Confucian literati or ru 儒 were not a closed social group inheriting positions in the imperial administration and privileges that came together with them. The ru by then was a much broader spectrum of people of different social background who could access education and civil examination. Even educated men without examination degrees could be called ru.49

Through studying local gazetteers, Sarah Schneewind points to Confucian morality as the center of village school curricula. She mentions transformation of the people and amelioration of the customs. She stresses that the morality was not of a Buddhist kind such as kindness to animals and vegetarianism. Children were supposed to learn Confucian morality and that included loving their parents and respecting their elders.50 There is a general idea that the value of loving one’s parents is an exclusive Confucian trait, this despite the fact that Westerners are quite aware that not many decades earlier Christian children were also taught to love and respect their parents, and that Buddhists are supposed to do the same. To love one’s parents has deep roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition. In the Hebrew Bible, honoring one’s parents is mentioned as one of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20: 2–17 and Deuteronomy 5: 6–21), which means it is important for Jews as well as Christians. The Lutheran Small Catechism also puts emphasis on the Ten Commandments. The

47  Zürcher 2013: 295.
48  Ibid.
49  Lidén 2018: 31. See also Dongtai XZ 1817: 906–917.
50  Schneewind 2006: 96.
Buddhologist Gregory Schopen argues that Indian Buddhists revered their parents long before Buddhism came to China.\(^{51}\) It is rather the Confucian argument that to become a monk is unfilial, which has created the idea that to love one’s parents is more important in Confucianism than in Buddhism. According to Schneewind, to educate people about correct rituals was a way to combat Buddhist and Daoist funeral and wedding practices.\(^{52}\) In my view, Schneewind overemphasizes the conflict between the Confucians and the Buddhists. There were Confucian apologetics who did combat Buddhism, and like Zhu Xi in the Song, tried to “clean up” Buddhist influences on rituals but, in the Ming, Buddhist ideas such as belief in karma and Buddhist funerals and other practices were on the whole accepted.\(^{53}\)

Schneewind furthermore argues that curriculum for primary schools changed during the Ming. She claims that in the early Ming the focus was on basic literacy, the *Great Warning* by the Hongwu emperor and Ming law, while in the mid-Ming stress was on the Five Classics and forming competent officials. Zhu Xi’s *Elementary Learning* was recommended for community schools in the mid-Ming.\(^{54}\) The primary schools obviously changed during the Ming, and they had to read the *Great Warning*, but they did not study Ming law as a subject. They were not even allowed to print judicial works or to read such books.\(^{55}\)

In the Song dynasty (960–1279), Zhu Xi (1130–1200) created a systematic and comprehensive curriculum. A famous essay on curriculum (*Chengshi jiashu dushu fen nianri cheng* 程氏家塾讀書分年日程) according to his views was written a century later by Cheng Duanli 程端禮 (1271–1345), intended for his family school and subsequently adopted in academies in the Ming and Qing dynasties.\(^{56}\) Cheng suggested that Zhu Xi’s *Elementary Learning* (*xiaoxue* 小學) should be studied before the actual reading of the Confucian classics, which should then start with the *Great Learning*, followed by the *Analects*, *Mencius*, and the *Doctrine of the Mean*, that is, the *Four Books*. In fact, the *Elementary Learning* was a rather difficult text. Zhu Xi’s intention might have been to have it serve as a manual for educators or more advanced students.\(^{57}\) Bai Limin argues that Zhu Xi’s book addressed both children and adults.\(^{58}\) In ancient

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\(^{51}\) Schopen 1984: 110–126.
\(^{52}\) Schneewind 2006: 96.
\(^{54}\) Schneewind 2006: 97.
\(^{56}\) Lee 2000: 385.
\(^{57}\) Lee 2000: 457; for Zhu Xi’s view on elementary learning see Gardner 1990: 88–96.
\(^{58}\) Bai 2005: 36.
times, “small learning” (xiaoxue) referred to reading and writing, and the “larger learning” (daxue 大學) to arts of the aristocrats namely ritual, music, archery, and charioteering. Zhu Xi put both the arts of smaller and larger learning into the schedule of primary education. A main idea of Zhu Xi is that the moral learning should start from early childhood. Sometimes his use of Xiaoxue or “lesser learning” as Gardner translates it, is a deprecatory view of the learning of the ‘small human being’ (xiaoren 小人) as opposed to the ‘authentic human being’ (junzi 君子). Zhu Xi’s shorter work, What Children should know (Tongmeng xuzhi 童蒙須知), talks about how a boy should dress, wash, talk, behave towards elders and so on. This work is more likely intended for elementary moral learning, but like Elementary Learning it seems to fit better as a manual for teachers. Bai Liming calls Zhu Xi’s emphasis on rituals such as “sweeping the ground, greeting and replying” (quotation from the Analects, Zi Zhang 12) “ritualization of the body”. She regards this ritualization as the principal purpose of Neo-Confucian education. Beside Elementary learning and What Children should know, Zhu Xi’s The Right Method of Reading (Dushu fa 读书法) was also an important work and formed the basis of Neo-Confucian didactics. Zhu Xi’s Elementary learning continued to be influential during the Ming dynasty. We should not forget that the philosophy of Zhu Xi became the official one during the Yuan dynasty and remained so during the Ming and after, although there was a paradigm shift in philosophy caused by Wang Yangming and his followers. As a result, all of his writings on education were taken extremely seriously.

Funding, School Buildings and Libraries

Local gazetteers frequently mention that local officials donated a piece of land to finance charitable schools. For instance, a school was established in Quanzhou located north of Xiamen in Fujian Province. It was financed by 100 mu of land. The grain they harvested from such properties would be used for paying the teachers or other costs. Such donations did not start in the Ming dynasty but were a continuation of earlier practices. During the Yuan dynasty, a certain Tong Juyi 童居易 also called Mr Duzhou 杜洲先生 in Cixi in eastern

59 Bai 2005: 33.
60 Zhu Xi’s What Children should know and The Right Method of Reading (see below) are reproduced in Chen 1772, shang 3a–6b and xia 3b–6a.
61 Bai 2005: 35.
62 Chen Hongmou 1772, Wuzhong yigui.
63 Bamin tongzhi 1490: juan 44: 5b.
Zhejiang Province once donated 400 mu of land to build a charitable school. At this school, they made offerings to the ancestors of Tong Juyi. Later, they rebuilt the charitable school into an academy called the Duzhou academy.\textsuperscript{64} Research on the Qing dynasty, shows that during the Xianfeng and Tongzhi reigns (1850–1875) the government made an administrative reform in the Southwest, which included setting up schools (yixue) to popularize Confucianism. Funds came from both governmental and local finance. Thanks to these joint efforts of funding, the number of established charitable schools increased.\textsuperscript{65}

In our sources, the buildings used for charitable schools are listed together with other kinds of school buildings. Local shrines, family shrines, academies and charitable schools are now and then rebuilt and used for religious and educational purposes. A defunct academy could be rebuilt into a shrine as well as a school or vice versa.

Ming gazetteers provide specific chapters on public buildings where they mention school buildings together with Confucian temples and archery gardens (shepu 射圃), indicating that they were inspired by the statement in the \textit{Analects} that Confucius taught the six arts including archery.\textsuperscript{66} The main hall of a school building could have a meaningful name such as “The Hall of the illustrious relationships” (Minglun Tang 明倫堂), which refers to an important passage on the moral role of schools in \textit{Mencius}.\textsuperscript{67}

Other educational buildings mentioned in the local gazetteers are ‘optimus studios’ (jinshi fang 進士坊) and ‘retreat studio’ (zhaishe 齋舍 or jingshe 精舍).\textsuperscript{68} The optimus studios were built for men who had succeeded for the highest imperial examination and might have been used by other candidates of the civil service exams. Retreat studios were constructed for self-cultivation and meditation. They are sometimes connected to the private academies (shuyuan 書院).\textsuperscript{69} Scholars would travel to a retreat centre or a private academy and stay there for a few days or even months to take part in philosophical debates, singing and meditation sessions. In these places Neo-Confucian thought was developed.\textsuperscript{70} The buildings of different types of institutions were erected close to each other, and they were funded by scholars and not by the state. My impression is that the educational level of the charitable school was

\textsuperscript{64} Cixi XZ 1624: juan 4: 13b.  
\textsuperscript{65} Wang 2007: 27.  
\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Lunyu}, Shu’er 27.  
\textsuperscript{67} Fuyang XZ 1916: juan 1: 14–15; for \textit{Mencius} see Teng Wen Gong I: 3.  
\textsuperscript{68} For jinshi fang, see Qiongzhou FZ 1615–20: juan 4: 69b; for zhaishe and jingshe, see Bamin TZ 1490: juan 44: 5b.  
\textsuperscript{69} Bamin TZ 1490: juan 44: 15b.  
\textsuperscript{70} There are several works on private academies. Meskill 1982; Hauf 1987; and Lü 2010.
in between the academy and the village school, and that the charitable school prepared students for lower examinations like access to the prefectural exams.

We know that there were school libraries, but those mentioned in our sources were located in county schools or in institutions of higher educational levels. Whether the village or charitable schools had school libraries cannot be proved but there might have been small book collections for teaching purposes. The county libraries were often called “Pavilion of Respecting the Classics” (Zun Jing Ge 尊經閣), which says something about the purpose of schooling. The Taizhou follower Xu Yue, who set up village schools in the Guizhou area, donated a book on archery ritual to the local library in Pu’an County, Guizhou, as part of his effort to spread Neo-Confucian learning to the “barbarians” in this area of non-Han Chinese people. In the same library, they stored classics such as the Book of Changes, the Book of Documents, the Book of Songs, the Spring and Autumn Annals, and the Book of Rites. There were examination aids and Neo-Confucian texts by Zhu Xi. It is interesting to note that they even had several works by Wang Yangming in this library. The reason might have been that Wang Yangming was highly popular in the middle of the 16th century. It can also perhaps be explained by the fact that Wang Yangming was sent in exile to Guizhou in 1507 and will have left a special imprint on the southern border area of China as one of the more famous intellectuals of his days. During his exile he worked on transforming and educating the local people. The books in the Pu’an library were probably used in the county school but, unfortunately, there is no information on whether the village schools and charitable schools also benefitted from them.

The issue of libraries leads us to the question which teaching materials was used in the charitable schools and to their educational program more generally.

Contents of Learning and Teaching Material

Already the Dunhuang manuscripts, dated between the fifth and the tenth centuries AD, include writing exercises and elementary textbooks. From the Song dynasty onwards, basic primary school material were three texts referred to as “Three, Hundred, Thousand” (San Bai Qian 三百千), a shortened reference to the Three Character Classic, the Hundred Family Names, and the

71 See Brook 2005.
73 Pu’an ZZ 1553: juan 3: 43.
74 Rawski 1979: 5.
Thousand Character Classic. The Three Character Classic (Sanzi jing 三字經) is not a real scripture of course, but a text containing short sentences consisting of three characters each with Confucian and moralistic contents, which were easy to memorize thanks to its simple structure. The Hundred Family Names (Baijiaxing 百家姓) was a book containing 411 family names, later expanded to 504. The Thousand Character Text (Qianziwen 千字文) contained rhymed lines and listed exactly one thousand characters to be learned by heart as well. Already in the Tang dynasty (618–907) the Thousand Character Text was a commonly used primer.\textsuperscript{75} The Hundred Family Names and the Three Character Classic were composed in the Song dynasty. Since the “Three, Hundred, Thousand” were still basic textbooks in the Qing dynasty we can assume that they were also used in both village schools and charitable schools during the Ming dynasty.

There was a book list issued in 1300 as a part of the decree to establish community schools. Since it is available in a work that details information on local government schools, it might mean that those schools were not so caught up in the examinations culture. According to this list, the Classic of Filial Piety (Xiaojing 孝經) should be studied first, and then the Elementary Learning, the Great Learning, the Analects, and Mencius.\textsuperscript{76} The local gazetteers do not have much information on the precise contents of studies at charitable schools were, nor what kind of teaching material were used. Quan Zuwang (1705–1755) says that schooling began with Hundred Surnames and the Thousand-Character Classic, and then continued with the classics, the histories, the calendar, and arithmetic.\textsuperscript{77} The teaching material used in Guo Moruo’s family school in the late Qing dynasty was the Three Character Classic, with sentences such as: “In the beginning, people’s original nature is good. Their nature is similar. With practise (during the course of life), they grow apart” which refers to the Analects.\textsuperscript{78} We can thus draw the conclusion that the three books “Three, Hundred, Thousand” were used as primers throughout the late imperial period although not necessarily as a single set. That did not occur until the late nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{79} As soon as basic literacy was reached, one started to read the classics. There is good reason to assume that the most frequently used classics were the Analects, Mencius, and the Classic of Filial Piety. A Korean source tells that even in the language

\textsuperscript{75} Zürcher 2007: 315.
\textsuperscript{76} Lee 2000: 390.
\textsuperscript{77} Schneewind 2006: 97.
\textsuperscript{78} Guo 1947: 33. The Analects Yanghuo 2.
\textsuperscript{79} Yu 2003: 12.
training for foreign students in China and Korean students in Korea, they read the Analects, Mencius and Zhu Xi’s Elementary Learning. However, new textbooks more adapted to the reader were also published. Lü Desheng 呂得勝 wrote two textbooks: Words for Boys (Xiao’er yu 小兒語), and Words for Girls (Nü xiao’er yu 女小兒語). Both works contained verses, some of them rhymed. The latter starts with the exhortation that young women should get up earlier than everyone else and go to bed later. Before this, there were other textbooks for girls such as the Classic of Filial Piety for Women (Nü Xiaojing 女孝經) and the Analects for Women (Nü Lunyu 女論語). Lü Desheng was the father of the well-known late Ming scholar Lü Kun (1536–1618). Following in his father’s footsteps, Lü Kun continued writing Sequel Words for Boys Xu (Xiao’er yu 續小兒語), but his importance for primary schooling did not end there. He also wrote a famous proposal to restore the village schools shexue.

**Students and Teachers**

The local gazetteers do not have much information on the actual students at village schools or charitable schools, such as their age, names, or number. Still, we can assume that they were of moderate means, that is, poor enough to not have a private teacher but rich enough to not be forced to help their parents work for a living. For instance, the founder of the Taizhou movement Wang Gen 王艮 (1483–1541) dropped out of school at the age of eleven, because he had to help his father in his salt business. The students were also predominantly male. If girls received some education, that would be from a private teacher or a relative. The Wang Yangming follower and scholar Geng Dingxiang 耿定向 (1524–1597), suggested that the officials ought to provide name lists of the teachers and the students, but the fact that he argued for it indicates that even during his time this kind of information was not recorded as a matter of course.

We also know almost nothing of the teachers either. We can assume that they were poor and/or had no higher examination degrees. If they had attained degrees, they would not have worked as primary teachers but moved on to official positions. The names of most teachers were never written down

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80 Nogôltae 2003: 1b.
82 Lü 1598: juan 3: 10a–17b.
84 Huizhou Fuzhi 1566: juan 22: 19a.
or have been forgotten. But there are exceptions, such as the village teacher of Wang Gen, Huang Wengang 黃文剛. He knew about Wang Yangming and even inspired Wang Gen to visit him. This proves that they could have an impact on the Ming history.

Perhaps an indication that the teaching quality not always was very good, Lü Kun 呂坤 argued for a state financed teacher’s program.85

Way of Learning/Pedagogy

As described above, we have some knowledge of the rulers’ and administrators’ objectives and what purposes the schools served from their point of view. The two main purposes of primary education in the Ming dynasty were to transform the students into morally good men – sometimes women – and to teach them practical skills such as reading. However, as for the actual pedagogy of primary education there is not much information. We know that the moral dimension was taught through choosing certain texts and explaining the moral content but also by letting the students practice rituals. Schneewind argues that the Confucian morality was taught experientially.86 Whether this means that the students were engaged in role play is however unclear, but they were supposed to learn good behavior such as greeting peers and caring for parents as well as rituals of capping, marriage, funerals, and sacrifices to ancestors. Some of the texts used might have been morality books. Publication of such books increased considerably in the late Ming period, and they were easy to read. There is also good reason to assume that they studied Zhu Xi’s Family Rituals. The above-mentioned rituals of capping, wedding, funeral, and sacrifice are described in this work.87 In the Ming dynasty, Buddhist funeral ritual was the most common. Some gentry families followed Zhu Xi’s funeral format as described in his Family Rituals, and we can assume Zhu Xi tried to weaken the Buddhist tradition and its rituals. Through the Neo-Confucian funeral ritual, the lineage was strengthened.88

According to Yu Li, the foremost method for learning to read was vocalization, memorization, punctuation, and explication.89 Vocalization and memorization went hand in hand. The Chinese term for it is bei 背 which literally

85 Leung 1994: 84.
86 Schneewind 2006: 96.
87 For a translation, see Ebrey 1991.
88 Brook 1989: 467–473.
89 Yu 2003: ii.
means “to turn the back” to the books. That the oral tradition never lost its grip in Chinese education is shown from the fact that reading aloud is still important today. “The revolutionary transition between oral reading and silent reading touted in the history of reading in the West did not seem to have occurred in China”, according to Yu. In late imperial China, the students should read with a loud voice for the teacher. It was often learnt from someone reading the text first for the child, not by the child memorizing it by reading the text himself. They would first memorize it without understanding the meaning or reading the actual text. For Zhu Xi the memorization process was to help the harmonization between the ‘mind’ or ‘heart’ (心) and the ‘vital energy’ (氣). Yu understands qi as “the inner flowing force of the text”. She argues that the strong belief that memorization helped a deeper understanding was fuelled by the Buddhist practice of sutra chanting. Thomas Lee points to increased singing and chanting as a part of the teaching process during the mid and late Ming period and links this tendency to urbanization. It is not clear to me why urbanization would lead to more singing and chanting. Instead, I think the importance of singing and chanting rather is a result of charismatic religious movements which became widespread in the Ming. My research on the Taizhou movement shows that masters used song and music as an integral part of their proselytization. However, chanting and music had always been a part of Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist ritual so that was nothing new, and reading in unison is widespread in traditional society world-wide.

The Korean text mentioned above (Nogŏltae) on language training gives us some information on the methods used for Korean (高麗) as well as Chinese (漢兒) students. Daytime in class the teacher read the texts aloud and the students read after him. In the evening after dinner, the students had to write couplets (對句), read poetry, and memorize the texts. Back in class the following day, the student had to recite the texts from memory. If he failed, he was beaten three times. The teacher had the names of all the students written on bamboo slips. He put them in a thick bamboo pipe, shook it and the selected student had to recite the text. If the student was able to do it, the teacher would make a note on the slip. If not, the teacher would check what was written on the slip. Had the student been able to recite it earlier, the
teacher would not hit him, otherwise he would.97 Thus, there was a system in
the penalty, but since the students were able to fail once the system was not
overly cruel. They were at least warned.

It is furthermore possible to draw some conclusions about pedagogy from
historical texts criticizing the teaching methods of their time. Many teachers,
no matter if it is in the West or the East, in the past or today, follow the method
expressed in the gazetteer of the Xianju County: “If the teacher is harsh in
the beginning, the Way [of the teacher] (shidao 師道) will be respected”.98
However, sometimes the Way of the teacher was harsh from the beginning until
the bitter end. Reflecting on primary education in the Ming, Wang Yangming
wrote “The essential meaning of instructing the uneducated” (Xunmeng dayi
訓蒙大意), a text which is included in the Record of practicing the transmitted
teaching (Chuanxi lu 傳習錄).99 Here Wang criticized the exaggerated use of
memorization and recitation as well as the writing of flowery compositions.
The latter is a common criticism among Neo-Confucian scholars, who argued
that education should focus on moral conduct and not on belle lettres, and this
was obviously true also for Wang Yangming. He wanted education that pro-
moted the teaching of filiality, brotherly respect, loyalty, faithfulness, propriety,
righteousness, integrity, and a sense of shame. At the same time, he argued for
freeing the boys from restriction and depression by letting them sing and enjoy
music. The activity should include physical exercise. He furthermore warned
against beating and tying the students up with ropes.100 Wang Yangming’s
idea of learning as concomitant with joy was taken up by the Taizhou prac-
titioners. The founder of the Taizhou movement, Wang Gen wrote a “Song of
Joyful Learning” (Lexue Ge 樂學歌), where he declared that learning was joy,
and if learning was not joyful, it could not be called true learning.101 A counter-
reading of those texts suggests that non-joyous learning, non-reflective memo-
rization, and abuse of children were frequent in Ming education. At the same
time, there was a discussion on those methods and attempts to change them.

97  Ibid. 2a.
98  Xianju XZ 1639: juan 6: 1a.
99  For a discussion on the title of Chuanxi lu see Ivanhoe 2002: 154–161.
The Link between Village Schools, Education and Confucian Ideas and Praxis

The link between Chinese education and Confucian ideology has a long history. The sacrifice to Confucius, the so called *shidian* 釋奠 rite, was performed for the first time in 195 BC at the tomb of Confucius. In 241, the sacrifice was held for the first time in the capital. It was performed in the Biyong 壁雍 of the Imperial University, which was a hall that served both educational and ritual purposes. According to Thomas Lee, a decision was taken to establish Confucian temples in local schools in the Northern Qi dynasty (550–577). However, Thomas Wilson argues that there is no record of Confucian temple before the Tang dynasty. He mentions that not until 630 Emperor Taizong (598–649) ordered the establishment of temples in all prefectural and county schools. In this way, he created a network of Confucian temples in schools throughout the country. This means that the symbiosis of Confucian temple and school already had a history of about 700 years in the beginning of the Ming dynasty. This obviously also referred to the charitable schools, and as mentioned charitable schools were built within the Confucian temple compound or close to it. In Fujian, 16 schools were built and at the same time the local gazetteer mention different shrines such as ‘The shrine of orthodox learning’ (*zhengxue ci* 正學祠), ‘the shrine of manifesting loyalty’ (*biaozhong ci* 表忠祠), and ‘the shrine of Zhu Xi’ (*Zhu Wengong ci* 朱文公祠). It could also be the other way around, namely that the Confucian temples or shrines were located in schools. Schools without any link to Confucian rites probably were uncommon, although we cannot prove this for each and every case. The gazetteers furthermore talk about sacrifices to Confucius or other Confucian teachers as part of the school activities. It could happen that charitable schools were rebuilt into shrines of high officials. In Taiping Prefecture, Zhejiang, a charitable school was rebuilt into a shrine for the former head of the prefecture. This was done in the beginning of the Hongwu reign (1368–1398). In 1582, a county school was rebuilt into a ‘Shrine for the Prefect’ (*taishou ci* 太守祠). Charitable schools could also be built in connection with other gods.

103 Ibid. 33.
106 Ibid. 33.
107 Minshu 1619: juan 37: 17b.
108 Changshan XZ 1683: juan 5: 6b.
and spirits, as for example Qiongzhou in Guangdong. Here the school was built in the temple compound of the literati god Wenchang (Wenchang 文昌). In this shrine they sacrificed to this god as well as to Zhu Xi (1130–1200) and Lü Zuqian 呂祖謙 (1137–1181). The latter had compiled the anthology Reflections on things at hand (Jinsi lu 近思錄) from Zhu Xi’s huge collection of transmitted sayings, intended as a guide to Neo-Confucian thought.

Zhu Xi had once argued for substituting the statues of Confucius by spirit tablets, although this was not carried out at the time. This would have meant a rethinking of his worship as a deity into worship as a kind of ancestor. The iconoclasm of Zhu Xi had its followers in the Ming dynasty, for instance, Qiu Jun 邱濬 (1421–95), who was a highly influential scholar and later Grand Secretary. He attacked the use of images and argued that sacrifices were aniconic in China during ancient times. For him the foreign Buddhist tradition using images were inferior to Confucianism. Like Zhu Xi, Qiu advocated spirit tablets instead of pictures and sculptures. Thus, we can assume that in some charitable schools, statues of Confucius may have been substituted by spirit tablets. Still there were also those who disliked this iconoclasm. The gazetteers mention that they built statues of Confucius’s worthies. At the abrogated charitable school of Liangzi 梁子 in Hunan province there was a statue of Confucius. If a change took place, it certainly did not happen all at once. By the late Qing, however, spirit tablets seem to have replaced statues completely in primary schools as we have seen in the examples of Shen Congwen and Guo Moruo above. All the same, the Confucius Temple in Qufu still had statues, both for Confucius himself and the lesser saints. All of their statues were destroyed by Red Guards at the outset of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. They took out ancient editions of the classical texts of the Confucian tradition from the bellies of the various saints. The statue of Confucius was even provided with internal organs in the usual way of religious statues, indicating that in terms of their original manufacture all of these statues had been treated as a deity, rather than an ancestor.

During the Ming dynasty the Neo-Confucian ideology had a firm grip on education, but we also know that there were no strict borders between the three traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism. Zürcher claims that in the Tang dynasty the Buddhists established pharmacies and orphanages but

111 Sommer 2002: 120–119.  
112 Hangzhou FZ 1686: juan 13: 3b.  
113 Huguang tujing zhishu 1522: juan 15: 67b.  
115 Ibid. 391. Robson 2014.
that they were not engaged in running schools, although sometimes engaged in the informal sphere of establishing ‘community schools’ (xiangxue 鄉學 or xiangxu 鄉庠).\textsuperscript{116} He notes that Buddhism has contributed to the community compacts (xiangyue 鄉約).\textsuperscript{117} The concept of ‘charitable schools’ (yixue 義學) only appears a few times in early Buddhist writings.\textsuperscript{118} Zürcher further complains that it is difficult to find information on education of the laity in China and explains it with the low status of the sangha in medieval China. There is much more information on the training of monks.\textsuperscript{119} It is quite likely that the Buddhist sangha were engaged in charitable works including charitable schools in the same vein as the Neo-Confucians did. It might even be the case that the Buddhists inspired the Neo-Confucians in that direction, but there is not enough material to investigate this hypothesis.

**Conclusion**

The difference between charitable schools and village schools is not very distinct in the Ming material, but it is nevertheless possible to draw some tentative conclusions. The meanings of the concept of ‘village school’ and ‘charitable school’ changed in meaning during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Sometimes the two concepts overlapped and sometimes they were used differently. The Hongwu emperor had ambivalent feelings about the control of the village schools. He distrusted his officials and preferred to have the villagers themselves choose teachers for the schools instead of letting officials control it. The charitable schools were set up by local officials, most likely because the village schools were defunct or never established in the first place. Beside schools, local officials were engaged in other charitable projects. The local gazetteers frequently use the concept of ‘the three charitables’, which included charitable granaries, schools, and graveyards. This shows that charitable schools were part of a larger strategy to improve local welfare. The concept of yi is therefore important. Yi has both the meaning of ‘righteousness’ and ‘charity’ or ‘charitable’. In the sense ‘righteousness’ it is one of the five Confucian virtues beside ritual, propriety, wisdom and fidelity. Those who were engaged in charitable projects often started within their lineage but frequently went beyond it. It is still unclear if the Buddhists and Daoists were engaged in similar projects but

\textsuperscript{116} Zürcher 2013: 318.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid. 298.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid. 331.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid. 299.
since the limits between the three traditions were very porous during the Ming dynasty, we can assume they did. Compared with rural village schools, the charitable schools were often located in urban areas. Funding was provided by land estate donations, with the grain from the fields serving as emoluments for the teacher or sold to pay for other educational expenditures.

The aims of the charitable schools were to transform children into morally good persons and to provide primary schooling, such as reading and writing. Information on the teachers and the children is insufficient, but we know that the charitable schools addressed children of less rich families and that students were predominantly male. Children of well-to-do families invited private teachers, and in the case of rich lineages, there were family or clan schools. The teachers at the charitable schools were most likely less well-off like their students, and they would have no or low examination degrees. If they had been successful in the examinations, they would have become officials.

Although there was a publishing boom in the 16th century, the pedagogy was first of all oral with vocalization and memorization as its main method. The teaching material at charitable schools were simple textbooks, such as the Three Character Classic, the Hundred Family Names, and the Thousand Character Text. The aim was to teach the students useful characters and at the same time teach them Neo-Confucian ethics including Confucian rituals of capping, wedding, funeral, sacrifices to ancestors and spirits. If the students would reach a somewhat higher level, they would read the Four Books that formed the basis of the civil service examination curriculum, to wit the Great Learning, the Analects, Mencius, the Doctrine of the Mean. At an even higher level they would continue with the Five Classics.

Criticism of primary school pedagogy formulated by radical scholars such as Wang Yangming gives us good reason to believe that corporeal punishments were very common. Wang Yangming argued for a freer pedagogy utilizing song and music and he was open to allowing children to play. A counter-reading of texts expressing strong yearning for a more joyful learning in the mid-Ming period, underscores the hypothesis that mainstream pedagogy inflicted great pain on the students. Still the main problem for most poor children, regardless of their gender, was to access education at all.

The link between Neo-Confucianism and schools was indeed strong. The very core of Neo-Confucianism was moral combined with textual learning. Hence, it is not surprising that Neo-Confucianism and schools were intertwined. Confucian temples often contained a school building, or the school contained a shrine where sacrifices to Confucius was held. Neo-Confucianism has abstract theories, but Neo-Confucianism as taught to students included
very concrete rituals which should be practiced. The Neo-Confucian texts were learnt by heart and recited so they would be a part of one's heart, breath, and life. A total transformation into a good and sincere person with strong integrity was the goal. Whether this goal was reached is another question and another study.

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Abbreviations in the Footnotes

FZ Fuzhi “Prefectural Gazetteer”
XZ Xianzhi “County Gazetteer”
ZZ Zhouzhi “Prefectural Gazetteer”

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