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Teachers as servants of state ideology: Sousa and Sales, Portuguese School of Commerce, 1759–1784

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Abstract

This paper draws upon Althusser [Althusser L, *Ideology and ideological state apparatuses* (notes towards an investigation). In: Althusser L, editor. *Lenin and philosophy and other essays* [Brewster B, Trans.]. London: New Left Books; 1971] to conceive two teachers of commercial subjects as apparatchiks serving an ideological state apparatus in order to diffuse a state ideology. We explore the lives of João Henrique de Sousa and Albert Jaquéri de Sales, the first two teachers of the Portuguese School of Commerce, established in Lisbon in 1759. Sousa and Sales were important propagators of commercial knowledge and mercantilist State ideology during the regime of the Marquis of Pombal (Chief Minister of Portugal, 1756–1777). We explore their role as operatives of an “ideological state apparatus” and the contribution they made to the growth of indigenous commercial know-how and the development of the Portuguese economy. We explore how their status in Portuguese society was related to the fortunes of the regime they served.

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1. Introduction

This paper is motivated, in part, by McPhail's (2001, p. 471, p. 472) gentle chiding of the scholarly community for providing little critical analysis of "the specific ways in which power may operate through accounting education." We provide a case analysis of how ideology was propagated in the Pombaline era in Portugal by focussing strongly on the *communicators*, that is, the accounting teachers themselves. We conceive the teachers, in terms used by Althusser (1971), as apparatchiks serving an ideological state apparatus in order to diffuse a state ideology. Such a focus is important because it seems to have been overlooked. Prior critical literature has focused on *what* accounting knowledge is communicated, and *how* communication takes place – but not on the *communicators* themselves – their social construction, *modus operandi*, and "life's world". As McPhail notes (2001, p. 477), many authors such as Althusser have concentrated on examining the role of education in inculcating ideology by focussing on "the language, practices, routines, techniques and architecture of education" – but not on the actual teachers, the actual *communicators*.

This case example canvasses aspects of curriculum and social practices, but adopts a biographical perspective to explore the lives of the teachers and aspects of their relationship with the leader of the regime they served. In doing so we provide a better understanding of teachers as "active producers of knowledge and agents of social change" (McPhail, 2001, p. 479, citing Erben and Gleeson, 1977).

We explore the lives of two teachers whose lessons reinforced a mercantilist State ideology that was intended to develop the economy and society of Portugal in the latter half of the 18th century. Both were teachers of the Portuguese School of Commerce, established in Lisbon, in 1759, by Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo. (He is better known by the title he acquired in 1769, the Marquis of Pombal. Hereafter, we refer to him simply as Pombal). Pombal as Chief Minister of King Joseph I (*D. José I*), was responsible for appointing João Henrique de Sousa as the first teacher of the School of Commerce (1759–62), and Albert Jaquéri de Sales as the second teacher (1762–84). Sousa and Sales were important transmitters of commercial knowledge in Portugal in the latter half of the 18th century. Many of their students became prominent in the Portuguese bureaucracy, and as merchants, and were instrumental in the development and modernization of Portugal's economy and society. We examine their lives, especially their service as teachers, using an Althusserian lens (Althusser, 1971) in which Sousa and Sales are conceived as apparatchiks who, either willingly or unwittingly, served to achieve the ideological objectives of the Pombaline State.

We begin by outlining the commercial setting of Portugal in first half of the 18th century and the mercantilist State objectives that Pombal sought to achieve. Subsequently, we present biographical profiles of Sousa and Sales. Our aim is to help understand how they acquired knowledge of commerce and accounting and to highlight their important roles in spreading commercial know-how in Portugal. We view Sousa and Sales as functionaries in an ideological state apparatus (an education system) which sought to effect Pombaline reforms. We partition our account of their lives into three periods: *before*, *during*, and *after* the regime of Pombal as Chief Minister of Portugal (from 1756 to 1777). In doing so, we embrace Althusser's concept of historical time (Althusser, 1970) to enhance historical understanding. We focus on the Pombaline period to explore the "moment in which" (Hindess, 2007, p. 2) the teaching of commerce occupied a central place in Portugal. Sousa

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