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**É precise fortificar as crianças! Health, Exercises and Educational Reform in Portugal (1750 – 1810)**

Although a number of scholars have written about the attention that eighteenth century thinkers in France, England, and others countries directed to health, exercise, and physical education, little attention has been given to events on the Iberian

Peninsula. Portugal, in particular, has been neglected. However, in their paper titled “Constructing Knowledge: Eighteenth Century Portugal and the New Sciences,” which appeared recently in *Arquimedes: A Journal of Sciences and Technology*, Ana Simoes and colleagues have pointed to the importance of educational reforms that began during the reign of King José I (1750-1777). Influenced by Enlightenment thoughts that swept through much of Europe, physicians like Ribeiro Sanches and Francisco de Mello Franco produced a number of works that were directed at improving the health of children and youth, and simple games and exercises were included in village schools.

Economic, political, and social conditions in Portugal at the beginning of the eighteenth century were considerably below those of England, France, Austria and other northern European countries. The catalyst for change occurred in 1750 when the king named Sebastião José de Carvalhoe Melo (Marques de Pombal) Secretary of the State. Pombal was a man of considerable vision and was determined to improve conditions in Portugal. He had spent time in England and Austria, where he came in contact with the ideas of such thinkers as Locke, Voltaire, and Montesquieu. In Austria Pombal also had contact with the Portuguese “new Christian” (a Jew who had converted to the Catholic Church) physician Antonio Nunes Ribeiro Sanches and with Gerard Van Swieten, both of whom had worked with the famous Dutch doctor Herman Boerhaave.

Directed to improve conditions in Portugal, Pombal set about instituting a number of reforms. Having seen how commerce and trade had benefited the English, he began to take steps to implement measures in Portugal. To do so an active mercantile class had to be created. Elementary schools were formed in each village. Initially, the emphasis was on reading and simple arithmetic. By the 1760s and 1770s, Pombal also indicated that the schools should give simple exercises and teach about hygiene. He also turned his attention to reforming the University of Coimbra.

The economic, demographic, and sanitary situation in Portugal was rendered precarious by the earthquake of 1755, which destroyed Lisbon. Pombal responded by implementing changes like reforming hospitals and creating health facilities. The earthquake also intensified efforts to expel the Jesuits (1756), who had had been in charge of all education. Their expulsion helped

remove religious injunctions that had prohibited a naturalist approach in the physiological sciences, and allowed greater attention to practical medical knowledge. Among those affected by changes at the University of Coimbra was Francisco de Mello Franco who began his studies in 1771. De Mello Franco's book *Tratado de Educação Física dos Meninos para Uso da Nação Portuguesa*, which states in the introduction *É preciso forticar as crianças!* (It is necessary to fortify the children!) calls for attention to the health of children and includes discussions about the physiological benefits of physical exercises. It drew especially upon such writers as Locke and Ballexserd. The influence of physicians Simon A. Tissot and George Cheyne is also evident, as is that of Boerhaave, in various other books by the Mello Franco. This paper is based upon a range of eighteenth century Portuguese sources and also such secondary literature as places developments there in a larger context.

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