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Between culture and the market: what do physics teachers take into account when choosing their textbooks?

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Abstract

Here we present some results of an ongoing study into the processes by which secondary school teachers choose physics textbooks, in this case, teachers from Brazil and Portugal. The objective is to understand what teachers take into account when selecting a physics textbook. To contextualise the study, the development and presence of physics textbooks in Brazil in the period between the mid-nineteenth century and the present day is discussed. These reflections highlight how cultural, economic, political and social factors are carried through to educational expressions. We show that the production of physics textbooks went through three periods, according to the pedagogical conception prevailing at each time. This research is based on the assumption that these books should be understood as elements of the school culture, being identified as cultural products as well as commodities. These dimensions have been little explored in research on textbooks, so this work presents a unique discussion that reflects on the relationship between culture and the market in order to understand physics textbooks from a structural perspective.

Keywords: physics textbooks, school culture, cultural product, commodity, choices processes.