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6.

PRACTICAL WORK IN SCIENCE EDUCATION: AN APPROACH TO THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

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Abstract

Practical work is currently considered by many researchers and educators as a structural component of science education. This paper intends to make a historical synopsis of the practical work in science education. After a brief passage through the antiquity until the 19th century, this manuscript continues with a view of the Portuguese context, highlighting important episodes that influenced the practical and experimental teaching in this field of knowledge. Then, the views on practical work are analysed, in the most recent curricular changes in the Portuguese education system, represented by the Curricular Goals and the Essential Learnings in articulation with the Profile of Students Leaving Compulsory Education. We conclude that the conceptualisation and the relevance of practical work have changed in a dynamic process over time, following the different economic, political, and social paradigms that have succeeded each other, alternating between approaches more influenced by a minds-on style and approaches more influenced by a hands-on style. Finally, the debate on the current relevance of practical work, with a view to its optimization and the establishment of its future format, in the teaching of science in the Portuguese education system, is urgently needed, within the framework of the current curricular references.

Keywords: Practical Work; Science Education; Curriculum; Educational Policies.

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