Practical work is essential in secondary school science education. Although there is no doubt about that statement, for example in the Netherlands, there is a discussion going on about the efficiency of practical work: what do students learn when they work on practicals, and is this the most efficient way to do so? (SCORE, 2008).

In order to motivate an on-going implementation of practical work, it is important to make clear the specific goals of practical work. This of course can be the development of specific subject knowledge and concepts, but also practical skills, more complicated skills like research and design, or motivation (Hodson, 1996; Abell & Lederman, 2007).

In the UK, the last years, a new initiative has been worked out which focuses on the goals and implementation of practical work under the title Getting Practical (2009). In every Getting Practical training, teachers discuss goals and working out of their own practicals. Based on the results of this discussion, teachers improve practicals collaboratively and design new material with clearly formulated goals. In this way, teachers get clarity about the learning outcomes as associated with practical work, and pupils experience more effective practical work which has more impact on what is learned in science lessons in total.

The introduction of Getting Practical in GB also reached the Netherlands. In the Netherlands GP is introduced by implementing it in teacher development teams. One of the results is the detailed development of different learning progressions for practical skills within the subject electricity. According to the needs of the students the sets of practicals can differentiate within one chapter on the learning goal.

We want to fill this conference session partly with an interactive discussion about deliveries of practical work and in this way we give a first impression of the project Getting Practical. Secondly we will discuss first experiences and products from a Dutch design team of teachers from the university of Twente. First research will be discussed from the Delft University of Technology who compared the learning outcomes of practicals designed by the Getting Practical way to regular practicals.


Keywords: Practical Work, Inquiry Based Learning, Continuing Professional Development, Teacher Design Teams