Young people often have a narrow concept of science and this can limit their future engagement with the subject. Many also struggle to identify, on a cultural level, with science and hence do not aspire to scientific careers (DeWitt et al. 2014). This lack of aspiration is particularly seen among girls and those from low socio-economic backgrounds (Archer, 2012). Young people do have interest in science, particularly with phenomena that relate to everyday life, and in the way that science helps to make sense of the world. Yet studies have shown that across Europe interest in science has declined in recent years and that there are problems with engagement and participation in the subject (Bøe et al., 2011).

The PERFORM project aims to develop young people’s conceptions and awareness of science, scientists and scientific research. But it looks to move beyond merely increasing scientific and technological knowledge to developing a reflective knowing of science in which young people can consider its purposes, values, and how it becomes reality. Learning science involves a re-structuring of perception and through this young people might come into new relationships with the subject, and perhaps themselves, in establishing their identity with the subject. To these ends scientific researchers, performers and young people will work together in schools in developing performance-based activities. It is hoped that the collaboration will increase young people’s engagement with science, its values and the processes of research.

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