Professor, No One is Reading You

Discussion published by Daniel Fandino on Tuesday, April 21, 2015

In this article from the Strait Times, authors Asit K. Biswas And Julian Kirchherr argue that academics should help shape public debate and policy. While Biswas and Kirchherr's arguments center on the need for policy-making suggestions by academics, they do raise good questions as to the utility and reach of the modern system of academic publishing.

The authors throw out some intriguing statistics, such as that less than 10 people read an academic journal in its entirety and that in the 1930s and 1940s, 20 per cent of articles in the prestigious The American Political Science Review focused on policy recommendations, down to 0.3 per cent today. Up to 1.5 million peer-reviewed articles are published annually, with 82 per cent of articles published in humanities, 32 per cent of the peer-reviewed articles in the social sciences, and 27 per cent in the natural sciences never cited once.

From the article

"MANY of the world's most talented thinkers may be university professors, but sadly most of them are not shaping today's public debates or influencing policies. Indeed, scholars often frown upon publishing in the popular media. "Running an opinion editorial to share my views with the public? Sounds like activism to me," a professor recently noted at a conference, hosted by the University of Oxford."

A solution put forward is if academics want to have an impact on policymakers and practitioners, they must consider popular media, which has been generally ignored.

http://www.straitstimes.com/news/opinion/more-opinion-stories/story/prof-no-one-reading-yo...