Review of: "Publish or perish: time for a rethink?"

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"Publish or Perish" is a good name for those organizational policies that force researchers to publish because their statistics are used as an indicators of productivity and efficiency. It is like asking students in a classroom to say something, anything, to establish that they are participating in whatever the class is about. Nothing good can come out of forceful communication. That simple lesson, however, has not been able to reach politicians and managers in charge of scientific institutions, who insist on having something "tangible" to evaluate productivity of "their" workforce.

It is certainly a time for a rethinking, even though the same problem has been discussed for decades, long before the Internet and, therefore, before Open Access.

The authors of this paper make the fundamental mistake of compounding that policy problem with OA. OA is not about article (or book) publications charges, APC (BPC). A quick consultation at the wikipedia can shed some light. But there is ample documentation explaining the concept and its relation with publishing financial models. A visit to the site of the re-known Directory of Open Access Journals, DOAJ, for instance, immediate shows that they have indexed 19,464 journals to this date, in 133 countries and 80 languages, of which 13,205, 67%, are journals without APCs. But if that is not enough to establish a possibility, the authors could go back to the foundational documents or to excellent accounts of the implications, such as Suber's Open Access or Eve's Open Access and the Humanities.

It is actually, quite ironical that Elsevier is presented as example of "the immense profitability" of OA, without a hint of what happened (with Elsevier, if we have to stick to one) before OA and before they could find a way to align with it by switching the same income they used to get from readers (and libraries in educational institutions) to the income they now get from writers (and the same institutions) or from a hybrid!.

Eventually, the authors will learn that 'Publish for free and read for free journals' is the original Open Access intention, and it is being achieved in many places.

I would invite the authors to widen their perspective. Instead of focusing in increasing the technical abilities of the system to filter out presumed low quality research, we must think about how to furnish the system with wider channels and deeper processes to better support the great conversation of science. For instance, they provided as evidence of the landslide of articles that "the number of published scientific papers has grown at the rate of three[1] to nine[2] percent annually, with nearly 1.8 million research articles, published in more than 28,000 journals entering the PubMed database annually[3]". But only in the US, the "employment of medical scientists is projected to grow 17 percent from 2021 to 2031, much faster than the average for all occupations". So, it would seem as if the population of participants in the conversation is growing

at a higher pace than rhythm with which they communicate.

I also have to say that the proposal to separate teaching from the production of research is an instrumental view of the whole problem. It a technical solution that could work as people would choose to "specialize" in teaching vs doing research. We certainly need better (and more) teachers and preparation for that is largely overdue. But who need teachers that do not communicate well in written form or who do not spend time in a lab or a plant or who do not participate in clinical trials? What would they be teaching about? What they learnt 20 years before?