

Studying and working in developing nations



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The basic education curriculum is generally similar across continents. This is also true for developed and developing countries. The main reason is that education systems were developed in developed countries and then spread across the globe. Despite this similarity, the amount of effort that students put into their education to achieve the same level of knowledge and capabilities varies widely between developed and developing countries.

In developing countries, the student to computer ratio is very low for science students. This makes life tough for statistics and computing students for whom having a computer is a necessity. Even where computers may be available due to donations from the developed world, the institutions struggle to get commercial software such as Stata or SAS. Of course, the alternatives are open platform software such as R, but then there are internet challenges for accessing updated packages.

One of the main challenges of working in developing countries is that it is not easy to access relevant short courses for one's career and relevant books. Students often fail to obtain the recommended books and subsequently rely mostly on lecture notes. This results in students being well developed in theoretical work but having limited application skills. Even students who may have their own computer and good internet face obstacles; it is difficult to find real data sets that students can use for practical work or dissertations. Thus, most graduates struggle with practical applications during their first few years of their first job.

In addition, though not specific to developing countries, communication is very disappointing. In many cases, collaborators take a long time to respond to emails. Student supervisors often take too long to give feedback to a student dissertation and surprisingly some students take too long to update their dissertations- in some cases up to the point of a supervisor chasing a student.

Working and studying in developing countries also has benefits. For example, people who work or study in developing countries often operate in real time disease scenarios; research questions are of direct public health interest. The impact of your research may be seen immediately as improvements in day-to-day health, updates in policy and guidelines, or enhancements to clinical practice, to name a few.

In summary, studying or working in developing countries is attractive in that disease scenarios and problems are real, making it more straightforward to find a research question of interest. However, one encounters many obstacles compared to someone working in developed countries. Those working in developing countries often take longer times to achieve the same career goals as those working in the developed world. The advantaged groups working in developing countries are those whose institutions are from developed countries performing a mission in developing countries. They have good access to the necessary study or work resources from the partner institutions in the developed world.