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**Review: *Writing Centers in the Higher Education Landscape of the Arabian Gulf*, edited by Osman Barnawi; and *Emerging Writing Research from the Middle East-North Africa Region*, edited by Lisa R. Arnold, Anne Nebel, and Lynne Ronesi**

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No two writing programs or writing centers are alike even within the United States. Add those distinctions already present in U.S. educational spaces to the historic, educational, linguistic, and cultural contexts of writing programs and writing centers situated in universities in the Middle East-North Africa (MENA) region, and it becomes clear why it is important for edited volumes like Lisa R. Arnold, Anne Nebel, and Lynne Ronesi's *Emerging Writing Research from the Middle East-North Africa Region* and Osman Barnawi's *Writing Centers in the Higher Education Landscape of the Arabian Gulf* to share research within these international contexts.

These books are two in a trend to expand the locus of writing and writing center work into international spaces. Specifically, they highlight practice and research coming out of writing programs and writing centers located in ten MENA countries. These books give voice to the valuable work administrators, tutors, and teachers are doing in contexts outside the United States while inviting them to continue sharing that work. Also, these books confirm the importance for individual teachers and tutors as well as writing centers, writing programs, universities, and associations like the International Writing Centers Association to develop and sustain communicative and collaborative channels across these spaces. As an administrator and teacher working in Lebanon, I find it especially exciting to see this type of work emerging from the MENA region.

Arnold, Nebel, and Ronesi's book centers on writing programs and Barnawi's book on writing centers, yet readers need not necessarily limit their energies to only one of these texts. They both offer insights into administrative histories, practices, and interventions, as well as perceptions students, tutors, and instructors have about writing and working with writers, which could be transferred to other writing contexts. Readers also need not only be from the MENA region to find value in these books. Of course, the research presented will be of particular interest to local audiences who might find similarities between their own writing programs or writing centers and those discussed through the chapters. Yet the authors highlight through their research the influences, practices, challenges, and realities students, instructors, and tutors face in the MENA region that readers in the United States and other countries might recognize as not quite so distant from those that exist in their contexts. These books invite readers outside the MENA region to learn about the writing tutoring and instruction happening there and to consider how they might build communication opportunities to continue examining perceptions and practices of teaching and tutoring writing across geographic spaces.

Arnold, Nebel, and Ronesi's book is divided into four sections that examine the evolution of writing studies in the MENA region, the convergence of imported curricula and resources with local experiences, the processes of students and instructors crossing international boundaries, and the challenges faced by students studying writing in these universities. Barnawi's book is divided into three sections that explore writing centers in Gulf countries: first, the histories of writing centers; second, the current realities of writing center practices; and third, the links and disparities that can be drawn across the findings from writing centers studied in this book. The authors of the chapters within these books are all either current or past teachers or tutors at MENA universities or U.S. consultants or instructors who were specifically invited to engage with curricula,

practices, or individuals working at MENA universities. The chapters in each cover a variety of considerations, the most significant of which center on the challenges of writing programs and writing centers located within relatively new educational systems with nonnative language instruction and on the effects of imported curricula and resources on teachers, tutors, and students.

Part 1 of Barnawi's book is titled "Historical Review of Writing Centre(s) Across the Gulf Countries" and recounts the creation of writing centers and archives-related materials in six Gulf nations (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and Kuwait) in ways befitting the goals of the Writing Centers Research Project (WCRP). The WCRP invites writing center staff to document and archive, among other things, the histories of individual writing centers, though this project is mostly dedicated to writing centers in the United States. Because much of the knowledge accumulated as U.S. writing centers were developing between the 1930s and 1970s was not saved, the WCRP seeks to reclaim data and ensure current records do not get lost. The chapters in the first section of Barnawi's book achieve the goal of documenting writing centers for these Gulf nations while also continuing to expand historical knowledge of writing centers outside U.S. borders.

Common threads conveyed in these chapters are that the educational institutions in these countries are relatively new and seek to enroll many local students. Because of economic shifts resulting from the discovery of oil in the region, in the 1950s several of these nations' governments began to reconsider educational institutions and curricula, with momentum building across all these Gulf nations in the 1970s. Dozens of new universities have been established since then, many of which were introduced as English-medium institutions because of the influx of Western industry and the rise of English as the global language of business. Many, though certainly not all, of these universities are accredited by the United States or are affiliated with U.S. universities. In part because of these relationships, quotas set by admissions policies in countries such as Qatar and aspirations set by national governments such as those in Kuwait and Oman have resulted in colleges and universities opening their doors to students who would not normally have had such an option and who might not arrive fully equipped for the task.

Over time, as students' needs in these countries became clearer, more resources were developed to help students who were often underprepared. While many students struggled with English language and writing issues, many also struggled in general with the expectations of postsecondary education. The authors in this section articulate that writing centers were created with these needs in mind, with the first recorded writing center

opening in 2005 at the American University of Kuwait, according to Salih Abdullah and Inan Deniz Erguvan in “The History of Writing Centres in Kuwait: A Critical Perspective” (p. 102). Dozens more cropped up at universities in Kuwait and neighboring countries over subsequent years, designed primarily to help students with their writing, and sometimes reading and speaking, for English-medium classes; however, several centers offer tutoring for Arabic languages as well.

The recent creation of these countries’ educational structures, the difficulties of students’ and teachers’ shift to English as the language of instruction, and the novelty of the concept of writing centers in the MENA region combine to set the stage for challenges for writing centers in these Gulf countries. For instance, in both “Negotiating Pedagogies in Omani Writing Centers” and “Writing Centers in Bahrain: Negotiating the Technologies of the Self,” Raniah Kabooha and Sajjadlallah Alhawsawi and Nasreen Mahmood Al Aradi illustrate how writing centers offer safe spaces for students to take risks to negotiate their learning. In addition, Kabooha describes the restrictive nature of EFL pedagogy in Omani higher educational institutions and Alhawsawi and Al Aradi observe that tutors in Bahrain must actively work to popularize the idea of the writing center while extinguishing widespread misconceptions.

Many of the chapters in Arnold, Nebel, and Ronesi’s book also relate the historical, educational, linguistic, and cultural influences on the development of writing programs in the MENA region. However, while Barnawi’s book centers on the Gulf, this text addresses universities in Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon, and Iraq, and instead of designating a separate section for such influences, they are discussed within the context of the authors’ research. For example, authors such as Anne Nebel and Hacer Hande Uysal illustrate how importing assumptions grounded in ideologies of monolingualism affect institutional policies and curricula that are not always effective in the international space. In “Linguistic Superdiversity and English-Medium Higher Education in Qatar,” Nebel shows how terms like *L1*, *native speaker*, and *ESL* inaccurately categorize the multilingual student bodies in MENA countries, which damages the understanding of and practices within local writing classes and research. In “Global Spread of English in Academia and Its Effects on Writing Instruction in Turkish Universities,” Uysal recounts how the influence of the Turkish government has impacted university instruction by establishing English as the language for science and academic publishing in order to keep up with global trends without providing schools adequate educational infrastructure to do so successfully.

Then, the authors illustrate how these influences on MENA universities affect individual teachers and students within the classroom as well.

For instance, in “Hybrid Writing Positions within WAC/WID Initiatives: Connecting Faculty Writing Expectations and MENA Cultures,” Amy Hodges and Brenda Kent observe how in Qatar, faculty in the disciplines struggle to teach writing in English, in part because many of them are not native English speakers. Najla Jarkas and Juheina Fakhereddine, in “The Dance of Voices: A Study on Academic Writing at AUB,” and Samer A. Annous, Maureen O’Day Nicolas, and Martha Townsend, in “Territorial Borders and the Teaching of Writing in English: Lessons from Research at the University of Balamand,” both describe Lebanese students’ writing struggles: The students have difficulty creating their own authorial voices (Jarkas & Fakhereddine) and seem to “not feel capable of handling the content of a cultural or philosophical nature in English, or at least they lack confidence in their ability to express their viewpoints on these topics in written English” (Annous, O’Day Nicolas, and Townsend, p. 97).

One particular struggle highlighted in both Arnold, Nebel, and Ronesi’s and Barnawi’s texts is related to but also separate from the impact of these historical, educational, linguistic, and cultural influences. Several authors illustrate instructors’ attempts to counteract tensions that stem from the use of U.S.-based curricula in non-U.S. contexts. For instance, in “An Arabian Gulf: First-Year Composition Textbooks at an International Branch Campus in Qatar,” Mysti Rudd and Michael Telafici report that it took certain students eight hours to read the 30-page introduction of *Writing about Writing* (Wardle & Downs, 2011), and often they were uninterested in or could not relate to topics covered throughout this or other textbooks. In this case, because the university is an International Branch Campus, instructors had to struggle with the needs and interests of the students versus the goal of designing the course to be “as rigorous” as its U.S. counterpart (p. 121). Meanwhile, in his chapter “Expanding Transnational Frames into Composition Studies: Revising the Rhetoric and Writing Minor at the American University of Cairo,” James P. Austin’s research contradicts scholarship that indicates U.S.-based curriculum does not work in international contexts; he found instances in which U.S.-based pedagogies allowed students to “write about and discuss topics not typically seen in Egyptian public discourse” (pp. 75–76).

Authors in Barnawi’s text find similar tensions caused by local writing centers adopting U.S. writing center practices, curricula, resources, and terminology. For instance, Hamid Ali Khan Eusafzai, in “The Emergence of Writing Centres in the Saudi Higher Education Landscape: A Genealogical Investigation,” elaborates on ways in which Saudi Arabian writing centers are working on a process of “Saudification,” a term taken from Andrys Onsman, to examine and draw on local needs, attitudes, expertise, and educational frameworks to create an “indigenous institutionalized

model” of Saudi writing centers (p. 16). Similarly, in the chapter “A Review of Writing Centre Tutor Training Materials in the GCC,” Tony Schiera examines how writing centers across several Gulf countries have integrated U.S. tutor-training materials with locally developed resources and tools. To highlight the necessity of these acts, he uses the metaphor of two farmers, one planting corn in the United States and another planting rice in Korea, to illustrate how different work must be done even though similar principles may be applied.

When considering the curricula and resources discussed through the chapters in both books, one topic I expected to be addressed among the challenges faced by individuals working in writing center and writing programs in the MENA region was that of access. Only Rudd and Telfaci discuss how students often have trouble finding sources, in English or at all, about paper topics that interest them. I had expected more of the authors to mention how the news and Internet are overflowing with content relevant to the West compared to matters significant to life in the MENA region, in part because of English being the primary language used in digital spaces. I also wondered whether the authors working in the region have had difficulty obtaining materials published and housed in the United States. Working in Lebanon, I have found many publishers will not send textbooks here; the university libraries wait months to receive requested books; when Amazon does ship here, the cost is prohibitive; and an untrustworthy Internet structure does not always allow access to certain websites. As I write about these two specific books, I cannot help but appreciate that Arnold, Nebel, and Ronesi’s book is available for free download at the WAC Clearinghouse, and I simultaneously worry that Barnawi’s book might not reach potential readers in the MENA region. (Even though an ebook version is available, accessing it requires a Springer library subscription or \$95 for a personal copy). It is likely, though, that others situated in different MENA countries have more access to such resources, and if so, ideally, connections could be made among administrators, instructors, and tutors within the region to purchase and transmit texts for one another or even create, share, and collaborate on new materials. Thus, I would have liked the editors of these books to seek more discussion of day-to-day challenges faced by tutors, teachers, and researchers in MENA countries (and perhaps elsewhere internationally). Including a review of these programs’ and centers’ practical needs along with possible recommendations for collaboration and/or outreach would have been beneficial, especially since many international writing programs and writing centers are situated more closely geographically to one another than they are to those in the United States.

These two texts highlight important work in international writing programs and writing centers. When examined side by side, *Emerging Writing Research from the Middle East-North Africa Region* showcases research that might prove more valuable for instructors and programs located in the MENA region and internationally than the research presented in *Writing Centers in the Higher Education Landscape of the Arabian Gulf*. The authors in Arnold, Nebel, and Ronesi's book provide useful information about writing programs, writing instruction, and perceptions of students and instructors in the MENA region while also illustrating useful methodology for examining the programs' influences, interventions, and realities. The work presented here could be directly expanded upon in future research projects or applied in other contexts, whether in a different geographic location or within a different type of writing program or writing center. Moreover, Arnold, Nebel, and Ronesi articulate three key goals for their book that invite readers to engage with the content in order to locate how they can benefit from and add to this international exchange. The authors want to make available and highlight valuable research coming out of the MENA region to foster dialogue and exchanges of ideas and practices about writing within the MENA region as well as across MENA, the United States, and other international writing spaces. The book is also designed to pinpoint where the gaps in research, writing, and teaching exist in writing spaces in the MENA region so more research can be performed. The authors are successful in meeting each of these goals. Specifically, this book highlights the need for more international instructors and researchers, in particular from the MENA region, to perform research and share their challenges and solutions. It also presents specific struggles that might engage readers from any location to consider reaching out across borders to unite over shared concerns, offer advice and support, and collaborate on teaching tools, resources, and research. As more English-medium universities are developed internationally, more insights from the individuals working within those contexts can be useful to improve curricula and pedagogies from the start.

For instance, Lisa Arnold, William DeGenaro, Rima Iskandarani, Malakeh Khoury, Margaret Willard-Traub, and Zane Sinno's chapter, "Literacy Narratives Across Borders: Beirut and Dearborn as Twenty-First Century Transnational Spaces," details an international collaboration among instructors who assigned literacy narratives that required students in Lebanon to interact with students in Michigan. And in "Rewriting Resistance: Negotiating Pedagogical and Curricular Change in the U.S./Kurdish Transnational Partnership," Connie Kendall Theado, Holly Johnson, Thomas Highley, and Saman Hussein Omar convey difficulties U.S. and Kurdish instructors had in finding common ground and respecting all

members' cultural values and pedagogical approaches during cross-cultural conversations about teaching and learning. Both these studies offer the benefits and limitations of such exchanges while also providing insights for administrators and instructors who might be considering building similar cross-cultural bridges and for textbook authors and designers of materials and tools who are seeking international audiences. Thus, the solid research and practical applications of findings throughout this book make it a useful text for a variety of audiences.

Barnawi, meanwhile, offers two primary goals for *Writing Centers in the Higher Education Landscape of the Arabian Gulf*: "To paint a comprehensive picture of the inner workings of WCs [writing centers] across the Arabian oil-rich Gulf countries and at the same time to expand on some of the global implications for how the WCs are placed within the Gulf countries" (p. xii). And he does achieve those goals by crafting a text that acts as an introduction to writing center culture in Gulf countries. In so doing, though, this text reads as if its authors are at early stages of writing center practice and research. Perhaps that is to be expected since the writing centers in these countries are still in their infancy—even the Middle East-North Africa Writing Centers Alliance is barely a decade old, having been founded in 2007, long after the International Writing Centers Association (originally the National Writing Centers Association) in 1983 (Kinkead, 1996; MENAWCA, 2013). So while the content alone might not immediately seem applicable for readers working in contexts within or related to these Gulf countries, what Barnawi's book does do is signify a burgeoning site for writing center research and practice and invite more interest from writing centers and writing center associations in and outside the United States.

There are three key reminders Lisa R. Arnold, Anne Nebel, and Lynne Ronesi's and Osman Barnawi's texts offer: First, the voices of teachers, tutors, and researchers at programs and centers in the MENA region must be included in current research and discourse. Doing so invites them to share perspectives on teaching and tutoring English-language learners with U.S. audiences that might be developing procedures and tools for currently increasing international student populations. This sharing simultaneously encourages writing and writing center researchers and practitioners in the United States to consider how support and communication can be better extended beyond U.S. borders. Second, individuals working within these international contexts should know others are close by who can serve as collaborators and resources. These books prompt administrators, instructors, tutors, and staff to make use of and recreate this platform from which they can reach out to one another for support, especially considering information and resources in the United States are often much farther

away. Third, these texts illustrate the need for more research on how U.S.-based practices, curricula, terminology, and ideologies interact with local educational environments, in particular since so many U.S. universities are developing global universities, with many in the MENA region. The increase in programs developing international ties, and in students willing to travel internationally for study-abroad opportunities or more extended educational experiences, means members of writing and writing center fields can become more knowledgeable about and proactive in dealing with challenges English-language learners and international students face regardless of the institutional locale. In addition to these main themes, the work presented by the authors in these two books broadens awareness for instructors, tutors, and researchers in writing and writing center disciplines who might be interested in seeking jobs outside the United States. Opportunities do exist for those adventurous souls, and enclosed within these chapters is useful advice for what to expect in these spaces.

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