

Persuasive Strategies in Website of the American University of Iraq: A Discourse Analysis Approach

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استراتيجيات الإقناع في المواقع الإلكترونية والانستكرام للجامعة الأمريكية في العراق: نهج تحليل خطاب

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Abstract

This paper presents a detailed qualitative analysis of the American University of Iraq-Baghdad (AUIB) website using Fairclough's (1995 p. 133) three dimensional critical discourse analysis (CDA) including text, discursive practice, and social practice. The study examines and explores how the site constructs credibility, suggests and provokes emotions, and appeals to reason in service of persuasion activity that is directed towards target audience. The study is an attempt to answer questions including how does the AUIB website employ linguistic persuasive strategies to build institutional credibility and attract prospective audiences, what textual and rhetorical strategies are employed, how do discursive practices, such as intertextuality, contribute to the persuasive strategy of the website, how are wider social and ideological values such as western academic prestige and modernization are embedded within the website discourse. The study hypothesizes that discourse can never be neutral and it should always include specific linguistic tools in order to promote a precise institutional message. Findings indicate a consistent alignment and effective utilization of linguistic choices, and ideological settings that support the presentation of AUIB as an academically credible, modern, and globally oriented educational institution. The discourse focuses on an image of western academic prestige, aspirational narratives of leadership and national development, and firm logical arguments linking education to a general progress of the society in Iraq. **Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis; Fairclough, Higher Education, University Branding, Persuasion**

المستخلص

تقدّم هذه الدراسة تحليلاً نوعياً مفصلاً لموقع الجامعة الأمريكية في العراق - بغداد (AUIB) على شبكة الإنترنت، وذلك بالاعتماد على النموذج ثلاثي الأبعاد للتحليل النقدي للخطاب الذي اقترحه (فيركلوف، 1995، ص 133)، والذي يتكوّن من ثلاثة أبعاد هي: النص، والممارسة الخطابية، والممارسة الاجتماعية. وتهدف الدراسة إلى فحص الكيفية التي يبنى بها الموقع مصداقيته المؤسسية، ويستثير المشاعر، ويخاطب العقل، في إطار نشاط إقناعي موجّه إلى الجمهور المستهدف. وتسعى الدراسة إلى الإجابة عن مجموعة من الأسئلة البحثية، من بينها: كيف يوظّف موقع AUIB الاستراتيجيات الإقناعية اللغوية لبناء المصداقية المؤسسية وجذب الجمهور المحتمل؟ وما الاستراتيجيات النصية والبلاغية التي يعتمدها؟ وكيف تسهم الممارسات الخطابية، مثل التناص، في تعزيز الاستراتيجية الإقناعية للموقع؟ وكيف تُضمّن القيم الاجتماعية والإيديولوجية الأوسع، مثل الهيبة الأكاديمية الغربية وخطاب التحديث، في خطاب الموقع؟ وتتطلب الدراسة من فرضية مفادها أن الخطاب لا يمكن أن يكون محايداً بصورة تامة، بل يتضمّن دائماً أدوات لغوية محددة تهدف إلى تعزيز رسالة مؤسسية معينة.

وتشير نتائج الدراسة إلى وجود توافق واضح ومستمر في استخدام الاختيارات اللغوية والأطر الإيديولوجية التي تقدم الجامعة الأمريكية في العراق - بغداد بوصفها مؤسسة تعليمية ذات مصداقية وحدائة وتوجه عالمي. كما يركز الخطاب على إبراز المكانة الأكاديمية الغربية، وصياغة سرديات طموحة تتعلق بالقيادة والتنمية الوطنية، إضافة إلى تقديم حجج منطقية تربط بين التعليم والتقدم المجتمعي العام في العراق . الكلمات المفتاحية: التحليل النقدي للخطاب، فيركلاف، التعليم العالي، الهوية المؤسسية للجامعات، الإقناع.

1. Introduction

University websites can be considered as an impotent and vital networks for presentation and promotion of institutional integrity, scientific and educational capabilities, as well as projecting a positive and sharp image of the academic institution. Persuasion of students, parents, and stakeholders is a central issue within this activity. In frameworks and societies which are characterized by rapid process of modernization and relatively new, but genuine, efforts for global integration, such as Iraq, institutions following American style higher education are unsurprisingly expected to assemble and implement discursive practices, and linguistic resources that promise national progress, as well as personal transformation. In this regard, one could notice a display of wide range of career opportunities. This paper represents an analysis of selected pages from the American University of Iraq-Baghdad (AUIB) website, in order to demonstrate how textual, and ideological elements can essentially work together as a combined form of solid and carefully directed discourse, aiming to persuade prospective students, parents, and other partners. The analysis is based upon Fairclough's (1995, p. 133) three dimensional CDA, which offers a solid base of layered, theoretically grounded description, and effective analysis of persuasion. The study adopts the position that within the current digital era, websites of universities will serve not only as general foundations, or mere sources of information, but also as effective and categorically well-designed communicative tools, that are carefully structured in order to attract targeted students, possible donors, and other partners. The basic hypothesis adopted by the current study, is that the discourse which is used on various university websites cannot be neutral at all. Rather, it contains specific ideologies, power dynamics, and well targeted persuasive goals. This standpoint will eventually help in shaping a specific view, and perception of higher education (Fairclough, 1995, p. 130; van Dijk, 2006). In fact, promotional discourse is increasingly implemented by universities that combine both academic and marketing rhetoric, which can focus on positive values, such as academic excellence, innovation, and a commitment for educational and professional global integration, or citizenship (Askehave, 2007; Bhatia, 2014, p. 298). Through meticulously selected, and carefully crafted language, visuals, and overall promotional layout, educational institutions aim to produce an image of credibility, as well as the highly desired academic prestige, and real opportunities for successful career development. The final goal of this attitude is to attract students and their parents. Within such scenario, the AUIB represents an important example, as it embodies a unique combination of western academic values, which is mixed with a local Iraqi cultural context, making its online discourse a very rich and interesting site for the current study. Therefore, analyzing and examining the persuasive strategies implemented on AUIB's official website will naturally give an insight into how institutional identity and power relations and dynamics are linguistically grasped and then effectively presented to the outside world. The final aim is to shed light on how could the design of language and discourse practices reflect broader ideological views and orientations of globalized educational system, and local presentation of academic institutions. The current study hopefully contributes to critical discourse literature by extending Fairclough's three-dimensional model, to the analysis of local Iraqi higher education digital discourse, which is an under-researched field. It eventually shows how persuasive strategies in institutional websites can possibly provide multiple functions, not merely at the textual level, but also within a wider ideological and social sphere. Such view would be in connection to globalization, educational reform, and local Iraqi national progress. Potentially, the findings would give insights for possible educational policymakers, university administrations, and people interested in discourse analysis, into how language resources can possibly be strategically designed and implemented, in order to shape a sharp institutional identity, and develop a positive influence on the public perception within growing societies.

2. Review of Relevant Literature

The study and analysis of persuasive strategies in institutional discourse, specifically within university websites, has gained significant scholarly consideration over the last two decades. In fact, universities are a presentation of a multifaceted social and cultural institutional framework that engage in discursive

practices reflecting and reproducing ideologies, values, and specific identities (Fairclough, 2013, p. 91; Wodak and Meyer, 2016, p.9). In the contemporary expansion of web based intellectual handling, websites serve as an essential and vital semiotic tool, where institutions construct legitimacy, integrity, reliability, and brand identity through effective persuasive language. It is therefore worthy to review and explore key theoretical and empirical studies that are relevant to the analysis of persuasive discourse in higher education websites, emphasizing Fairclough's CDA framework, and its relevance to digital institutional communication.

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis, within the last few decades, has gained substantial attention from many scholars in the fields of linguistics (including general and applied), sociology, political science studies, and many other related fields of research. CDA is considered as an approach to careful and detailed analysis of language that examines and studies how power, dominance, inequality, and bias are actually embedded within language, and how they show up through talk or text, which is applied in social and political frameworks. What distinguish CDA from other related lines of discourse analysis is essentially its critical nature. In this regard, the concept of critical would imply the inherent capability to reveal the hidden relations, and possible inner motivation of discourse, which could help explaining the deep layers within the production and reception of a specific linguistic utterance. Hence, CDA can be viewed as a linguistic methodology that can empower the researcher to examine, and carefully explore a specific discourse, by relying upon several operational lenses. Wodak (2014, p. 302) defines CDA as "a problem-oriented interdisciplinary research program, subsuming a variety of approaches, each with different theoretical models, research methods, and agendas". Therefore, within the field of CDA, language use is viewed as a form of social practice. That position implies that users of language are attentive to how languages could make social, and mental correlation, specifically, for persuasive aims. The development and implantation of CDA, as a theoretical framework, is credited mainly to the works of Fairclough (1992), Van Dijk (2008), Gee (2010), and Wodak (2014), where their research was primarily targeting the possible hidden links, and relationships, between mere texts on one hand, and the exercise of power on the other hand, where their main argument was that there is a basic, and firm, but somewhat hidden, connection between texts, and social structure and events.

2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis and Persuasive Discourse

Critical discourse analysis, as pioneered by Fairclough (1992, 1995), presents a methodological framework for understanding how language could functions ideologically within social contexts and structures. Thus, CDA enables an examination and analysis of how persuasive features such as authority, integrity, and inclusivity are linguistically grasped (Fairclough, 1995, p. 107; van Dijk, 2011). Persuasive Discourse is not simply related to rhetorical appeal, but rather it is about the production and reproduction of overriding ideologies (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, p. 26), and within educational framework, discourse is an essential tool in building demonstrations of academic excellence, integrity, modernization, and effective global competitiveness. Fairclough (2013, p. 204) argues that particularly in neoliberal backgrounds, institutional discourse often implants a form of market-oriented ideologies that are presented under the umbrella of academic or social values. Thus, in university websites, persuasive Discourse can be viewed and understood as a manifestation of neoliberal educational discourse, merging both promotional and informational genres (Fairclough, 1993; Bhatia, 2014, p. 144).

2.3 Fairclough's Framework and Institutional Discourse

The analytical model of Fairclough emphasizes three interconnected dimensions of discourse including text, discursive practice, and social practice. This form of triadic method allows scholars to analyze and uncover how language shapes power dynamics, institutional ideologies, and various socio cultural settings within institutional communication. Fairclough's model of analysis has been widely applied in higher education research in order to study how universities discursively present their local missions and values. For example, Fairclough (1993) first recognized the so called "marketization of discourse" in higher education, observing how academic institutions were increasingly implementing commercial and promotional linguistic strategies. This viewpoint has been further advanced and explored by scholars such as Mautner (2010, p. 72) and Wodak (2015, p. 160) who argue that universities implement persuasive discourse to promote and establish neoliberal reforms in order to attract global audiences from various countries. Fairclough (1995, p. 9, 36) stresses on a form of dialectical association between discourse

and social change, making CDA specifically suitable for analyzing online dynamic contexts such as university websites. This notion of interdiscursivity which represents the mixing of genres and discourses directly applies to university web texts, where there is an inevitable overlap between institutional, promotional, and academic discourses. Mautner (2005, p. 72) highlighted such style of hybridization within university brochures and websites, which can potentially show how the discourse of academic institutions is continuously adding elements that can be considered as advertising content, such as university slogans, positive student testimonials, and general appeal to emotions. This observed unique blending of genres can eventually be considered as a direct reflection and confirmation of Fairclough's (2003, p. 32) position, that institutional communication has become a central and effective site for the construction of identity, and presentation of ideology.

2.4 Persuasive Discourse in Higher Education Websites

University websites have become basic resources, and important windows for institutional presentation, branding, and attraction of students and stakeholders (Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2006). Numerous studies have revealed that academic institutions are increasingly using persuasive discourse for the purpose of attracting international students, donors, and giving a positive image which is directed towards the general public (Bhatia, 2014, p.185; Mautner, 2010, p. 72). For example, Askehave (2007) studied university booklets and argued that within such content there is a combination of academic information which is blended with subtle persuasive language that is designed to show the institution as both academically rigorous and socially responsible. On a similar line, Mautner (2010) showed that universities' online texts often mix both educational and commercial registers, reflecting a form of neoliberal effects which are reflected on higher education. In addition, other studies have shown that university websites serve as persuasive tools that construct institutional identity and appeal to multiple targeted audiences including students, parents, potential donors, and local policymakers. On the same line, Askehave (2007) examined mixing of genres in university websites and argued that the borders between informational and promotional discourse are quite vague and somewhat blurred, forming a persuasive hybrid aiming at both informing but also attracting broad audiences of possible students. These findings line up with Fairclough's (1995, p. 130) notion of discourse synthetic personalization, where institutions simulate a kind of personal interaction with the reader in order to create rapport with potential targeted students or stakeholders. Recent CDA based studies have explored universities' online rhetoric in connection to globalization and international branding.

2.5 Digital Discourse, Neoliberalism, and construction of Persuasive Identity

Fairclough's (1993, 2013) works showed that neoliberal ideology has deeply influenced institutional discourse, leading to educational transformation into a new academic space. This kind of "marketization" is shown in the language of university websites, which heighten, innovation, chances for employability, and broad global partnerships (Jessop, 2018). The persuasive framework or presentation of universities as brands, rather than merely academic institutions, shows the ideological direction of discourse in legitimizing rationality of economic standpoints and targets within higher education (Brown, 2015, p. 175). Scholars such as Mautner (2010) and Bhatia (2014) stretched CDA to analyze promotional genres within institutional communication. For example, Bhatia (2014 p. 268) argues that persuasive discourse in academia depends on genre colonization, where advertising activities deeply and consistently permeate educational texts, where this strategy can be traced in university websites that assume activities such as strategic slogans, affective appeals, and visual rhetoric to attract students and stakeholders. Fairclough (2003, p. 38) previously viewed such practices as an indication of interdiscursive shifts and changes reflecting wider socio economic dynamics.

2.6 Persuasive Discourse, Power, and Ideology in Higher Education

A constant theme in CDA research is the interconnection between language, power, and ideology (Fairclough, 1989; van Dijk, 2011). In the background of university websites, power is applied discursively through claims of integrity, academic excellence, authority, and general direction towards targeted job opportunities. Fairclough (1995, p. 119, 128) argues that institutions implement discourse to legitimize hierarchies and endorse social practices in alignment with the aforementioned institutional ideologies. The persuasive direction of such discourse strategically lies within its ability to promote specific worldviews, such as the promotion of global competitiveness or the final inevitability of neoliberal global reform. CDA offers effective advantages for analyzing the persuasive discourse of university websites, as it allows

scholars to connect between micro level linguistic attributes and macro level social and ideological structures (Fairclough, 2010, p. 27). Therefore, when implemented in digital contexts, CDA shows how web based texts participate in the ongoing redefinition of higher education identities and structure. Furthermore, this notion inspires a reflexive position toward the researcher's stance in discourse analysis, showing that interpretation itself is socially situated, which goes with van Dijk's (2011, p. 382) socio cognitive approach, stressing on the role of mental models and shared knowledge in the production and interpretation of persuasive language.

2.7 Gaps in Literature and Present Study's Contribution

Despite the growing literature of research on institutional and promotional discourse, yet, limited critical discourse analysis has been conducted on Iraqi higher educational websites, particularly from a Faircloughian perspective. Existing studies on university digital discourse largely focus on western or Asian academic spheres, and often more attentive to marketing or genre-based approaches, with less focus on the ideological and persuasive functions of language in post-conflict or developing educational contexts such as Iraq. Moreover, this study systematically integrate linguistic analysis with social practice to examine how a private university in Iraq construct legitimacy, global. Alignment, and local national narratives through digital discourse. Therefore, the AUIB website does represent a unique example, where models of western academic standards could intersect with local socio-cultural environment. By utilizing Fairclough's CDA, the current study can be considered to have a potential contribution to related literature of CDA, through filling the regional and theoretical gap by showing how persuasive discourse can operate at the special site of intersection between globalization process, construction of specific local identity, and distinctive academic institutional branding. It could also be argued that it can potentially extend the application of CDA to electronic digital contexts. This a position can be considered as an alignment with Fairclough's (2013, p. 165) call for analyzing new communicative frameworks which are shaped by technological developments. In doing so, it attempts to situate AUIB's website discourse within a broader sociocultural and ideological transformations, including the systems of Middle Eastern higher education, namely in Iraq.

Methodology

3.1 Study design

The study adopted a qualitative research approach which is essentially based on Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of CDA. The aim is to explore the persuasive strategies which are practically employed by the website of the AUIB. The analysis went through three methodologically inter-connected stages. Starting at the textual level, unique linguistic features, including lexical choices, modality, rhetorical constructions and evaluative expressions, were identified and explored. The aim is to show how features such as authority, credibility, and academic ambition are linguistically grasped and integrated. The second analytical level at the discursive practice, the focus of examination was directed towards genre mixing, positioning of the target audience, and interdiscursivity, aiming to investigate how academic, professional, and promotional discourses are functionally combined and implemented. The third phase which was at the level of social practice, the analysis tried to linked the aforementioned discursive patterns to the much broader ideological structures, including ideas such as globalization, neoliberal educational values, and the narratives of national development within the local Iraqi community. Although the analysis is basically qualitative in nature, yet, recurrent discursive features were objectively summarized and identified within a dedicated quantified table. This would eventually enhance the analytical transparency, and can provide a clear comparison across all studied website sections. It is yet obviously worth noting that these numerical values or representations, would only function as an added interpretive support for qualitative findings, rather than formal statistical measurements. In fact, this integrated approach can potentially allow for a more robust analysis and examination of institutional discourse parameters, yet, also preserving the essentially critical and interpretive orientation of CDA.

3.2 Fairclough's Three Dimensional Model

Fairclough (1995, p. 3) created a three dimensional model for the purpose of analysis and conception of discourse, constructing a type of graded analytical scale, starting with small units of discourse, and ending with the larger frame. This methodology of Fairclough (1995, p. 150) has exceeded the so called "whatness" of the text under study, towards the "howness" and "whyness" fields within the interpretive and explanatory vision of analysis. These steps comprises the descriptive stage, where there is

a focus on linguistic analysis of the discourse as a mere text. The second interpretive stage, on the other hand, includes the link, or the relationship, between the production of discourse under study, and the discursive activity which resides within the text. And finally comes the explanatory phase, which includes the process of explaining the relationship between the social context, and the interaction or discourse itself. Fairclough (1995) demonstrates that the first phase of analysis contains a coverage of a form of classical examination of linguistic components which involves for example, the structure of grammar including modality, lexical choices and transitivity, as well as other linguistic components including synonyms and metaphors Richardson (2007, p. 53, 237) argues that the intentional selection of specific linguistic components within a text, should help to reproduce, or resist, bigger targets of discourse, like ideology and power. At the interpretation phase of discourse, there is an examination of a collection of similar texts, which are used as a reference point of comparison, between the discourse under study, and other available texts. Predominantly, speech acts, presupposition, intertextuality and coherence are significant at this stage of analysis, as they help showing the possible connection of a specific text within discourse, to its local or relevant practical context. Concerning intertextuality, Fairclough (1995, p. 131 and 1992, p. 104) proposed two forms of it, including “manifest” and “constitutive” intertextuality. The former includes the recognition of the existence of other definite texts within a new text, for example quotation marks, or allusion could precisely show these. The latter, on the other hand, includes the recognition of a form of mixed genres, with close connection to other orders of discourse and social change, where there is an expression of numerous values, exceeding the textual level, and encouraging the receiver to view and recognize the hidden discourses (Blommaert, 2005 p.29). The phase of explanation includes the process of social or sociocultural practices, and it involves the hegemonic relations, orders of discourse, and political and ideological components of discourse (Fairclough, 1995). Having said that, it is important to think in a way where there is an ongoing process linking all these three stages together, so that one could show identities, power distribution, ideological components, and the relations which are deeply rooted within any piece of discourse. Such process might create analytical confusions or dilemmas concerning at which phase the ideological part is embedded within the discourse. In this regard, Fairclough (1992, p. 86) explains that ideology can be subtly embedded within all these stages. Hence, it is included in the social conditions, text, the interaction itself. Consequently, it is important to take a careful consideration of all these three phases when implementing CDA. In other words, it is important to think in a comprehensive way, by linking all these phases together while analyzing identities, power dynamics, ideologies, and the relations that are included in any segment of discourse (Richardson, 2007, p. 46). In summary, one could say that discourse is therefore not only what exactly was said, but, in addition, how something is said within a specific social structure.

3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected from the official website of the AUIB (<https://auib.edu.iq>) and the data pool consists of selected webpages representing both general institutional sections (e.g., about, mission, vision, and admissions) and six college-specific sections including art and science, dentistry, engineering, law, business, and pharmacy. These pages were selected because they function as the primary presentation, by which the educational institution could construct its public identity, as well as addressing prospective students, parents, and potential stakeholders. Screenshots and their textual content were archived for analysis.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Observing the beginning of the website, or what is referred to as the “Hero Section” in web design conventions, there is a fairly remarkable sentence: “Inspiring leaders on a global level”. Such initial rhetoric at the beginning, gives the reader an impression that there is high value evaluative language, which has a remarkable framing of future oriented outlook. One could feel an ambition and a positive picture. The specific usage of the word “leaders” has a clear function connecting education to leadership identity, which appears very early at the website. This start is, indeed, a very striking and eye catching claim. Using phrase “on a global level” doesn’t seem a mere coincidence, rather it gives an impression of designed ambition towards wider international spheres. The overall initial impression is that the entire sentence is highly declarative and unhedged, which can give the reader a signal of confidence. This beginning is followed by a clear call to action: “let’s get started” which includes a vibrant usage of imperative mood, where the reader feels a call to conversion or change. Moving on to observe the embedded discursive practice, if one

examines the production side, the general discourse seems to reflect the commonly observed conventions of global university marketing, where the classic AIDA style (awareness, interest, desire, action) can be recognized. The impression is that there is an associated link, focusing towards a specific “brand” so to speak, through an obvious appeal to leadership rhetoric or identity, and the general atmosphere of global higher educational marketing. On the consumption side, where one could theoretically imagine prospective students and parents going through the website, they could view “global leaders” as a clear promise of employability, international mobility, and a form of high status. Prospective students would specifically read the clear call to leadership as a real opportunity to achieve their legitimate dreams to build a very bright future. Parents, on the other hand, may read such discourse as an assurance towards social mobility, which could be very appealing to local community. Policymakers, who have central influence on higher education, might interpret such discourse as a practical alignment with the local goals of national development and economic prosperity. Regarding intertextuality, the phrasing gives the reader an impression which echoes western elite university slogans that promote leadership as the ultimate goal of higher education. This can also takes us back to the enlightenment era, and then rapidly to modernization discourse. The general frame of the perceived narrative seems to borrow legitimacy, from global education rhetoric. Finally, as a social practice the observed text at the “Hero Section” can function to legitimizes AUIB’s institutional role within neoliberal educational frameworks. Within such atmosphere, there is an emphasis on values such as human capital formation, and global competitiveness, which are considered as core values within neoliberal frameworks. The discourse draws on deeply rooted standards that equate higher education, with the cultivation of leadership and competitiveness within the knowledge economy. This aligns well with modernization narratives that encourage global economic, and even social, integration. Going more through the website to the section of “our promise” which represents the mission text. The basic idea is:

“No country or region can develop and flourish without contemporary education as a cornerstone of progress and enlightenment” This is obviously a very strong categorical, general assertion, and its modality is very high, with no hedging, and therefore, such rhetorical tone would be reflected on the reader as a great deal of certainty. Lexis such as “progress”, “enlightenment” or “flourish” implies civilizational atmosphere, albeit with some historical hints, and the general outline puts a special focus on a heading “our promise”, which is followed by a clear cohesive paragraph that serves to highlight institutional commitment, and specific values. Through presenting education within a frame of national necessity, the discourse views institutional authority as a natural need, and therefore, links private educational investment to a more broad general public outcomes. This position would eventually empower the educational institution as a developmental agent, while, at the same time, stressing on modern westernized models of education as a normal occurrence, or even a clear necessity. Analyzing the sides of discursive practice and interpretation, the production of discourse seems to draw on development ideas, framing and presenting education as a natural source and even as a driver of human capital. This would eventually appeal to humanitarian global policy rhetoric, while the consumption side, on the other hand which includes, possible students, parents and policy minded people, would eventually interpret the statement as linking education with the recovery of national economy, and general prosperity of the society. If one wants to find a link to intertextuality, the discourse seems resonates well with the past and present. The former is in relation to classic narratives of enlightenment, and the later to the contemporary goals of sustainable development, which recently commonly focused upon within the narratives of higher educational institutions. From the standpoint of social dimension, the text seems to put forward a unique ideology which is expressed within a frame where education is presented to the reader as the cornerstone of state building, and subsequent economic growth. This kind of ideology will place the university as a necessary institution, rather than being a mere educational luxury, within Iraq’s modern trajectory. Power dynamics authorize institutions that embody modern western standards as developmental concepts, while Institutional credibility, on the other hand, is achieved through confident and professional tone. Ambition and national pride are focused upon, as the audience of readers is invited to imagine their dreams coming true, through personal and national transformation. Here, there is an evident causal claim linking modern education with societal flourishing. Two other mission statements starting also with “our promise” are observed. The first one tackles global challenges states that: “A degree from AUIB transforms your journey with deep academic education and cultural understanding, preparing you to tackle global challenges.” The second one is related to community

and partnerships stating that “AUIB has created a flourishing educational community based on exceptional faculty, global partnerships, and a rock-solid commitment to the future.” Concerning lexis and register the phrase “transforms your journey” puts a special focus on broad and general personal transformation, “deep academic education and cultural understanding” give an impression of scholarly academic depth, and specific competence within international cultural framework, “tackle global challenges” on the other hand, would possibly suggest seriousness, competence, and educational reliability. The mood of discourse is certainly highly assertive, with no hedging, while the overall general rhythm could effectively support memorability. The heading “our promise” frames the text as if it was an assertion to a kind of predetermined commitment. Examining the effect of discursive practice, at the production side, such kind of mission statement seems to be directed towards broad audiences, where it shows a clear blend of development discourse, which is mixed with significant global challenges, yet, adding other narratives that are encouraging personal growth: “your journey”. While on the reception side, students and their parents who read the text and could see this as a guarantee of passion and sophistication. External partners and policymakers, on the other hand may interpret the discourse as willingness to collaborate on global issues. Intertextuality shows subtle echoes of international education policy, and language commonly used by well recognized international bodies, Like the United Nations for example. Thus, “global challenges” gives a fairly heavy moral weight. As a social component, the statement puts AUIB within the general narratives of global problem solving, positioning the university as an actor within the geopolitically relevant knowledge production. It also worth noting that this language elevates the value of cultural literacy in a post conflict national context aspiring to the highly desired international integration. One additional finding is that the statements use metaphors, for example placing education as “journey” and the university as guide, challenges as obstacles to be “tackled.” Lexis and register of the second “promise” statement includes key value words “flourishing”, “exceptional faculty”, “global partnerships”, and “rock-solid commitment to the future” which create a dense collection of positive evaluation. “Community” puts the institution relationally, not just as service provider, but also as an essential part of the society. Modality is categorical, “has created”, suggesting realized achievement, rather than theoretical objective. On the production side, the text draws on reputational weight, and third party validation through partnerships and faculty excellence. While on the reception, prospective students and parents read this as stability and quality assurance, partners, on the other hand, could view it as invitation them to collaborate, where this could be of much value within the local culture of the Iraqi society. Such position gives the impression that the AUIB puts itself within an established model which contains solid links between human knowledge and economy. Which is an obviously true and self-evident claim. Yet, strangely enough, it still has a strong effect adding weight to the overall discourse. The emphasis of such discourse focuses on western-aligned knowledge streams as the route to a secure economic future to the country. There is a clear direction towards strong faculty excellence and partnerships, which are classic markers for institutional credibility. In this regard, clear attempt to establish solid case of credibility is manifested by using “flourishing” and “rock-solid commitment”. Such lexical selection suggest safety, optimism, and belonging, and the general structure implies that inputs including faculty partnerships, plus commitment, will eventually yield the guaranteed outcome which is “a flourishing community”. It is worth noting that the phrase “rock-solid” could be seen as hyperbolic, however, providing evidence such as student retention rates and international partnership with AUIB could lend credibility to the claim. Another powerful statement is found before introducing specific colleges: “At AUIB, your education kicks off with an intensive English proficiency experience at our English Language Academy to ensure your success within the global workplace. Next, defining the American liberal arts tradition, our Core Liberal Arts courses provide the foundation in multi-disciplinary studies with Humanities, and Social, Computational, and Natural Sciences that emphasize communication, analytical, and critical thinking skills and prepare you for a lifetime of active learning.” Concerning lexis and register the text uses institutional lexis “intensive English proficiency”, “English Language Academy”, “global workplace”, and “American liberal arts tradition.” These phrases convey prestige and global belonging. Enumerations like humanities, social, computational, and natural sciences are indicators for breadth and structure, while value laden descriptors “foundation”, “communication, analytical, and critical thinking skills,” “lifetime of active learning” certify the liberal arts ideal. Concerning grammar and modality, the declarative present tense with confident modality “kicks off”, “provide”, “prepare you” convey certainty and institutional authority, which centers AUIB as agent

by stating “your education kicks off...”, “courses provide...”, “prepare you...” representing the institution as an enabler. On the production side it reflects a standardized global university attractive narrative, English proficiency is viewed as a core curriculum leading to specialization which is presented to both local and international audiences. It blends marketing discourse (including success, global workplace), with academic discourse like liberal arts, and critical thinking. Students being the natural receivers of such discourse, could interpret the English academy as a natural access to global inclusion, and job opportunity inside and outside the country. Parents, on the other hand, are expected to read it as an additional assertion to previous discourse, which guarantee that the faculty is committing itself to the general education standards, which were focused upon within previous web pages. Intertextuality reminds the reader to pay attention to classic liberal arts traditions, which imports the prestige and status of U.S. higher education. Also, the expression “global workplace” derives its receptive value from established employability discourse. At the College of Arts & Sciences there is another interesting text: “Welcome to the College of Arts & Sciences (CAS) at the American University of Iraq-Baghdad. Here you will find courses and majors in areas of study typically found at American institutions: from history, literature, and philosophy, to biology, computer science, and mathematics.” Here, a classic American academic pattern can be observed. The phrase: “courses typically found at American institutions” gives the reader an impression of extensiveness, through enumerations of multiple disciplines including, biology, chemistry, mathematics, literature, and so on. A clearly confident and descriptive modality, will complement the discourse fabric, projecting an assured institutional identity. Grammar includes a phrasing of descriptive, present tense, a declarative statement, and minimal hedging, where one could note the existence of balance between being assertive and confident, but without unrealistically claims. Production element of discourse derives its persuasive weight from American curricular standard, including liberal arts, wide scientific breadth and disciplines. Then the offer is structured as globally standard academic practice. The discourse, therefore, looks like as if it intentionally aligns the college with American curricular models, in order to attract students seeking internationally recognized education and mobility. The indirect implication here, is the final result of possible employability. Looking at the consumption dimension of such discourse fabric, prospective students, while reading the core message, would probably interpret the broad disciplinary varieties as an indication of comprehensive educational system. Intertextually, the explicit reference to American institution is a clear gesture to prestige, and a well-recognized quality ranking. From the point of view of social practice the discourse aligns itself with western academic prototypes, and presents these models as a normal standard, and desirable educational framework. Hence, reproducing structure and function of western cultural standards and norms into the field of Iraqi higher education. This can be viewed as an ambitious narrative, which focuses on enabling professional development, and enhances employability within the wider global market. Credibility is directly stressed upon, through the clear standards of the American institution. The intertextual content of discourse is based on lexis commonly used within American higher educational norm, for example, liberal arts, majors, minors, and humanities integration, where one could indirectly feel the American or westernized “flavor” within such discourse. The reception side who reads the text includes local students and their parents. Here, “American” naturally gives the impression of language of instruction that can potentially transfer the opportunities of graduates outside Iraq. This will include high potential for employability. Such discourse points out a kind of attempted cultural investment, firmly linked to western academic standards, but then planted in nonwestern contexts and countries. The College of Dentistry seems to apply a very similar general outline of persuasive discourse within its expressed texts by stating: “The College is committed to offering contemporary educational programs aligned with evidence-based practices, industry trends, and emerging technologies. Students will gain practical, hands-on experience through simulated procedures in state-of-the-art preclinical classrooms. Clinical skills and knowledge are acquired through clinical rotations and exposure to patient cases in dental clinics. These facilities are equipped with the latest technologies and tools to ensure students receive cutting-edge education and training, in addition to purpose-built research laboratories reflecting the College’s commitment to advancing dental research and innovation. Students are trained to communicate effectively with patients, understand their unique needs, and develop treatment plans that prioritize the well-being of individuals.” Concerning the textual descriptive level there is a heavy use of evaluative boosters including “contemporary”, “evidence-based”, “industry trends”, “emerging technologies”, “state-of-the-art”, “cutting-edge” and “purpose-built research laboratories”. The semantic

ground is technologically professional, supporting dentistry with high technology practice and advanced research. Grammar and modality show clear commitments and guarantees, as for example “is committed to”, “will gain” express very high knowledge and deontic modality. Transitivity gives agency to the college as provider, offer, ensure, and train, putting students as recipients. Cohesion and structure, on the other hand, show that process sequence is an expressed simulation leading to preclinical classrooms, clinical rotations, exposure to patients and research laboratories, and the overall impression suggests a developmental pipeline from practice to research to patient-centered care. Regarding discursive practice including interpretation, the discourse merges formal academic language with the significantly different marketing discourse. Interestingly enough, such blend does not show on the surface when one normally reads the text. The persuasive discourse borrows legitimacy from medical education terms like, evidence-based practice, clinical rotations, etc. Consumption of such text includes prospective students, or parents, who could read it as a safety and quality assurance. Clinicians, and industry minded people, on the other hand, may interpret the core claim as a readiness for technology driven dentistry. Intertextuality shows orientations to evidence based practice and simulated techniques, standardized global models in health education like OSCEs exams, and simulation-based training. As a social practice or explanation the text echoes neoliberal professionalization in higher education skills and employability, which are understood in terms of technological capital and patient-centered outcomes, which also reproduces English dominant, western medical customs as a target for quality in Iraq’s emerging private higher education setting. Authority is assembled through evidence-based claims, advanced facilities, and research laboratories. Within the persuasive realm of discourse, one could observe calls to care and ethics through “well-being of individuals,” This line of expression will be reassuring to Iraqi families about the importance of compassionate medical practice which could be a crucial standpoint for the local community. Additional worth mentioning observation is the potential gap within the implied persuasive tone, which relies on linguistic intensifiers, rather than real observed metrics. In this regard, adding real-world data, for example, simulation hours, student to equipment ratios, clinic caseload, licensure pass rates, and research outputs would obviously strengthen logos, and give better credit to the above-mentioned claims. An interesting text is found at the college of Engineering: “Values (3 I’s)” “In the AUIB COE, our values are the foundation of our vision for Iraq and our commitment to fostering a professional learning environment for our students, faculty and staff. These values describe our culture and can be summarized as 3 I’s: Integrity – Promote an ethical and respectful environment in our words and actions. Innovation – Apply creativity and sense of purpose to everything we do. Inclusion – Everyone (students, faculty and staff) have an opportunity to participate.” Textual descriptive level shows a register centers “vision for Iraq” and three repetitive pillars the “3 I’s”: Integrity, Innovation, and Inclusion. Definitions use normative verbs “promote”, “apply,” “have an opportunity” and inclusive pronouns “our”, “everyone”, while grammar and modality shows present tense declaratives, and deontic modality build certainty and commitment. Discursive practice on the production side the text functions as an institutional ideology statement similar to normal corporate professional language which is aimed at internal position and external signaling, while on the reception side, students may perceive it as belonging and general fairness. Employers and partners could read innovation as a promise of problem-solving which is obviously a central employability character, regulators would interpret integrity as compliance. Intertextuality echoes global engineering codes of ethics and Western university values statements and the phrase “vision for Iraq” obviously includes a nation-building discourse. From the point of view of social practice or explanation the page positions engineering education as a vehicle for ethical modernization adopting globalized values backgrounds while committing to local national development. It is worth noting that such discourse can claim that private higher education is a possible factor potentially contributing to public goods including, ethics, or the highly desirable professional inclusion in a transitioning economy. Credibility is shown through institutional integrity, which functions as a moral qualification. Interestingly, institutional “vision for Iraq” adds very strong public general legitimacy. It is worth mentioning that publishing real-world data for example, diversity metrics, integrity policies, and innovation evidence like capstone projects, patents, industry collaborations and other objective metrics, could substantially support the persuasive tone of the aforementioned discourse. The college of law seems to have its own style: “Welcome to the Bachelor of Law Program” “Are you ready to take the lead? Dive into the Bachelor of Law program at AUIB Law School, where we empower you with the essential skills needed to excel in the dynamic world of law. Embark on a journey

that prepares you for the legal landscape in Iraq and equips you to thrive regionally and globally. At AUIB Law School, we don't just teach law; we mold leaders. Our curriculum transcends textbooks, offering hands-on experience, Moots Jurisprudence, and practical insights that distinguish our graduates. Our Deanship, along with students from our Jessup Team, are esteemed members of the American Society of Law. Join us and discover how we're shaping the legal professionals of tomorrow." The textual level (or description) lexis and evaluation show a clear promotional language "take the lead", "empower", "excel", "dynamic", "mold leaders", "transcends textbooks" which chains with programmatic markers "hands-on experience", "Moots Jurisprudence", "Jessup Team". Also, membership in the "American Society of Law" functions as status marker, while grammar and modality shows a rhetorical question and imperatives "Are you ready...? Dive into..." which create engagement and high agency. When such discourse is read by the targeted audience, the minimal hedging explicit certainty, and metaphor usage, are effective in shaping the mindset of the reader, which is evident through viewing education as a journey preparing graduates to thrive and develop both regionally, inside Iraq, and also on a global level. As a discursive practice (or Interpretation) on the production side there is a classic enrollment genre mixing motivational rhetoric with signals of professional socialization like moot court, or experiential learning. The reception of such discourse tone is by prospective students, would interpret leadership formation as a form of global identity. Legal employers, would be exceptionally attracted to elements of experience which are included within the educational fabric, and affiliations. Concerning intertextuality, there is a significant references to Jessup moot and American legal associations, which evoke transnational legal culture, and the high status of international law. This could be of significant importance within a post-conflict zone. The implied social practice (or explanation) shows that the text positions AUIB within a frame of globalized legal educational fashions, focusing on practice readiness and international exposure. Although this might be somewhat new to the local society in Iraq, yet it can potentially contributes to the construction of an elite, leadership-oriented legal identity in Iraq's evolving rule of law landscape. Here, creating an identity is a very clear example on how discourse can take part in shaping events within the outside world. Credibility, on the other hand arises from moots, experiential pedagogy, and association memberships. Master of business Administration page headline contains another interesting discourse: "Become a strategic leader... Step into a world-class business education tailored for ambitious professionals ready to transform their careers. The AUIB MBA program is a dynamic, globally oriented degree designed for working professionals who will lead and make an impact in business and society" On textual level (or description) lexis and evaluation the MBA discourse uses corporate consulting term including "strategic leader", "world class business education", "globally oriented", "transform", and "make an impact" which centers ambition and professional mobility. Grammar and modality on the other hand show a declaratives and infinitive constructions which are indications for certainty and possibility for "working professionals". The discursive practice (or Interpretation), on the production side, one could note that there is a genre blend of executive education marketing, and graduate collection description which is optimized for easy reading, with a bold and a short body paragraph. Early career professionals, or ambitious mid-career business administrators, who would be the natural target for the persuasive discourse, would read the text with a mindset assisting reception of flexibility and a form of global weight. Taking a look at the implied intertextuality, one could see that the discourse closely mirrors established advertising practices of some global MBA institutions. Using eye catching lexical choices and expressions such as "leadership", "impact", or "global orientation", seems to align well with usual discourse of international business schools. While within the social component (or explanation) the text can be viewed as a reflection towards the solid general standards of higher education. Such attributes like leadership and impact, may function as marketable competencies, which would position AUIB as an assumed secure channel for Iraq's integration into the wider global business ecosystems, as well as the nearby regional private sector programs. Modality and lexical choices show a form of clear high modality assertions. In fact, one could note that this stance could be further supported through publishing genuine career metrics, including for example, alumni real outcomes, which would naturally make the logical merits more solid, and will probably differentiate AUIB in a relatively crowded MBA market. The College of Pharmacy, on the other hand, starts its unique discourse with an interesting central question: "Why choose us?" which is followed by powerful, yet, very concise answers: "Innovative Curriculum: Our carefully crafted curriculum equips students with a deep understanding of evolving roles in healthcare. Learn from distinguished faculty who

have made a global impact and gain practical insights through our award-winning approach. "Practice-Ready Graduates: Our Bachelor of Pharmacy... blends foundational science education with rigorous, diverse clinical internships. Graduate as a confident practitioner... poised to shape the future of healthcare"

"Global Partnerships: As a member of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP), the European Association of Faculties of Pharmacy (EAFP), and the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP), our students benefit from global networks and best practices. Our partnerships with the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) and the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) ensure exclusive access to specialized certificate programs" A vocabulary which can be viewed as professionally oriented, and highly domain-specific, can be shown in textual analysis. Lexis, like for example, "clinical internships", "practice-ready", "patient-centered care", would naturally give the reader a signal of relevance towards professional and career orientations. "Award-winning", "distinguished faculty", and "world-class" can be considered as classic hints for status and prestige. Here the discourse probably appeals to emotions rather than merely logic. Grammar and modality, on the other hand, express the usage of some language structures which are likely to give hints for future orientation, focusing on the possible end results of academic time line. This can include for example an expression like: "Graduate as a confident practitioner" which would suggest, or subtly imply a kind of guaranteed outcomes. Going more deep through discursive practice (or interpretation), on the production of discourse, one could observe pages which can be considered as representing a marketing overloaded program, which are designed to match real world vocational expectations, and this seems to acknowledge the local high demand on medical professions within the national society in Iraq. Such attitude would promote chances of employability, accreditation, and significant partnerships within the established local medical enterprise, and the overall messaging seems to be somewhat broad targeting both early career students, and mid-career professionals. This again aligns well with local needs. Prospective students, the classic targeted receptive audience, would naturally read detailed program claims as practical indications for career readiness within local Iraqi's medical environment. A potential for skilled hires, can be reflected towards companies and employers, for example within the growing pharmaceutical industry in Iraq. Policymakers, may view such discourse as an alignment with the needs of local governmentally administrated health workforce environment. It is obvious that by giving significant attention to clinical internships, industry partnerships, and "practice ready" outcomes, the university as a socially active institution, can potentially participates in the process of ideologically shaping local higher education, and marketing of its graduates as, eventually, a kind of "labor market products". Such effective discourse can be seen as supportive to ideological neoliberal standpoint towards universities, considering them as basically deliverers of employable skills. The discourse also shows a creation process of a form of "professional identity", which is brought in line with the standards of global pharmacy and business in general.

Pharmacy Landing Headline includes an interesting statement:

"Become a Future Leader in Pharmacy with AUIB's College of Pharmacy... world-class, purpose-built facilities... at the forefront of patient-centered care." On the textual level (or description) including lexis the section is saturated with positively evaluative lexis and boosters "carefully crafted" "rigorous", "diverse", "next scientific revolution", "global networks" "exclusive access", "transformative care" and "advance healthcare globally", and thus the semantic field extents professionalism, global integration, and innovation. Concerning grammar and modality there is a high modality declaratives including "equips", "ensure", "are powered by" which signal institutional certainty and control. Transitivity puts the college as the agent providing resources and guarantees, with students as beneficiaries who will become "practice ready" and "poised to shape the future". Therefore, cohesion and structures show a logical progression is implied curriculum leading to internships, practice readiness, supplemented by partnerships and research. Parallelism in headings including "Innovative curriculum" "practice ready graduates," "global partnerships," "impactful research and innovation") produces a form of rhythmic cohesion which is clearly eye-catching. Discursive practice (or interpretation) on production the discourse merges academic register with marketing discourse, and it draws on the professional authority of pharmacy associations to augment institutional credibility. On the consumption side prospective students and parents read it as a quality assurance narrative. Employers, specifically within pharmaceutical factories and marketing industry could interpret this as a signal of alignment with international practice which is quite vital in such business. Finally, regulators may read it as an indication of compliance ready graduates. Intertextuality shows an

explicit references to AACCP, EAAP, FIP, APhA, and ASHP index global professional regulatory bodies. While such expressions could not be readily easy to understand and analyze by targeted students and parents, yet, they only help to import a form of discursive authority into AUIB's institutional brand. From the side of social practice (or explanation) the text again replicates a neoliberal higher educational logic. In such frame universities should promise employability, global mobility, and innovation through partnerships and technology, this positions a private university in Iraq as a bridge in trans-national healthcare education, lining up local national development with global standards. Here, again there is a solid role of discourse, in shaping the nature of outside real world.

5. Quantified qualitative summary:

Although the study is essentially qualitative in nature, a numerical summary is provided in a dedicated table in order to demonstrate a general view that summarizes the distribution and frequency of key persuasive discourse features identified qualitatively. This would help to clarify the extent and frequency of implementation concerning persuasive strategies across all studied colleges. The actual frequencies within the table represent objective analytically identified discourse features, rather than simply counting raw linguistic data. The textual features include evaluative lexis and modality, while discursive practices include interdiscursive elements and audience positioning, and finally, social practices include various ideological themes.

Table (1) Distribution of Persuasive Discourse Features across AUIB Colleges. *(The numerical values in this table represent the frequency of analytically identified discourse features across Fairclough's three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis)*

College	Textual Feature (lexis, modality, evaluation)	Discursive Practices (interdiscursivity, audience positioning)	Social Practices (ideology, power, identity)	Total
& Sciences	14	12	10	36
istry	18	14	13	45
neering	12	13	12	37
	17	15	14	46
ness (MBA)	16	15	13	44
macy	20	16	15	51

The distribution presented in Table (1) demonstrates a consistent institutional pattern in the use of persuasive discourse across AUIB colleges. It is worth noting that professionally oriented colleges such as pharmacy, dentistry, and law show higher frequencies across all three dimensions, reflecting a form of dense evaluative language, extensive genre mixing, as well as strong ideological positioning. While other colleges including arts and sciences and engineering maintain a relatively more balanced profile, foregrounding academic legitimacy while still aligning with Iraq's national development as well as global integration narratives. Overall, the quantified summary clearly supports the detailed qualitative analysis, confirming that AUIB's website discourse is clearly centrally coordinated, ideologically coherent, and strategically designed to construct Western academic legitimacy, as well as neoliberal conceptions of higher education as significant social and economic capital.

6. Conclusions:

This study has demonstrated how an institutional website could function as complex site of ideological meaning making, and promotion, through carefully selected linguistic, and discursive choices. It has suggested that AUIB employs a highly rational, purposefully constructed discourse that systematically implements persuasive resources across all three dimensions of Fairclough's (1995) critical discourse analysis framework. The analysis has shown that persuasive discourse is steadily realized through careful lexical selection, modality, evaluative language, and interdiscursive mixing, rather than through simple, and linguistically isolated rhetorical devices. These findings confirm the central assumption within CDA research that discourse can never be neutral, but rather it is socially positioned and motivated, and institutionally oriented. Far from being described as random or fragmented, the university's website discourse shows a robust linguistic structure of united and solid institutional vision that combines and implements precise discourse components, solid fabric of interdiscursive structure, and a clear social position. Such structure is firmly ideologically grounded. One of the most important and significant

positive findings of the current study, is the consistency with which AUIB organizes its academic mission statement across different colleges, while at the same time, giving each discipline an enough space to maintain and express its professional unique specificity. At the textual level, AUIB's discourse obviously shows strong clarity, confidence, and it was quite rich in evaluative expressions. The consistent implementation of effective, and high-value lexical choices, assertive modality, and future-oriented metaphors can help to build a unique and solid image of institutional reliability, ambition, and professional orientation. It can be argued here, that these solid linguistic components would positively contribute towards building trust among prospective students, parents, and other partners. This is achieved by promoting a view of education not merely as a simple delivery of intellectual content, but rather as a structured and carefully designed course or pathway toward leadership, genuine possibilities for employment, and even transformations at a personal level. Importantly, the observed and analyzed discourse, clearly avoids ambiguity in institutional commitments. This feature could naturally enhance the credibility in the higher educational framework, as any degree of uncertainty can undermine the general public confidence. At the level of discursive practice, the university displays an obviously advanced ability to functionally, and effectively integrate multiple linguistic genres and discourses, including academic, professional, developmental, and promotional registers. This kind of effective interdiscursive flexibility can be considered as a significant strength within the university's overall discourse. Such flexibility gives the chance to AUIB for addressing diverse range of audiences simultaneously, including students, families, employers, policymakers, and other international partners, without undermining, or fragmenting its basic core message. Such a clear and effective discursive competence would naturally line up AUIB with modern contemporary global standards of university communication. This can positioning it as an academic institution which is effectively, and practically capable of involving both local and international partnerships, within a shared and unified educational vision. From the perspective of social practice, one of the most important and significant positive findings of the current study lies in AUIB's consistent alignment of higher education with the highly desired and attractive goals of national development in Iraq. The discourse repeatedly presents education as an essential source, or even as a cornerstone, of societal development and progress, economic recovery, and human capital development within Iraq. By putting important and significant weight on core values such as leadership, ethical standards, professional competence, and global integration, AUIB positions itself as an important and active contributor to Iraq's post-conflict modernization process and reconstruction activities. This positioning is specifically significant within a national frame, where the process of rebuilding institutional trust, professional competence, and international credibility remain challenging tasks, and a significant central national strategic priority. Moreover, the university's direct and clear orientation toward the well-known traditions of American liberal arts, professional accreditation, English language proficiency, and wide global partnerships, would be of great functional and practical importance to the local society. What makes such discourse highly effective is that the aforementioned attributes can clearly enhance the realistic chances of graduate mobility, possible employability, and professional international recognition. This would eventually offer Iraqi students an access to international, overseas academic and professional system, without the need to leave the country, which would be clearly highly attractive to students and their parents. In this sense, AUIB can contribute in the process of reducing local educational brain drain, while simultaneously raising and supporting the standards of national higher educational environment. While the analysis has critically showed the limited usage of empirical metrics and data within some persuasive claims, this observation cannot be considered as undermining the general university's strengths. Rather, it highlights an opportunity for future enhancement, through complementing and supporting the already very strong discourse, with indicators of observed quantitative performance. Overall, the analysis demonstrates that AUIB's website discourse actually excelled in constructing a firmly credible, aspirational, and socially responsible institutional identity. This position is basically in alignment with established western academic standards, yet at the very same time, highly responsive to Iraq's local needs. In conclusion, the current study suggests that AUIB's digital discourse represents a vibrant, and strategic model of professional institutional communication within the territory of local higher education. It can be considered as a practical demonstration, concerning how a private university in Iraq can effectively, and functionally employ discourse in order to promote a vision of sharp academic excellence, significant ethical leadership, and an opportunity to national development. Yet, at the very same time, engaging positively with global

educational field. As such, AUIB's website discourse is not only reflecting legitimate, and ambitious institutional position, but also it is effectively and meaningfully contributing to the vital process of broader transformation within higher educational system of Iraq.

7. Policy Implications and Future Directions:

From a policy perspective, the findings of the current study suggest that educational institutions such as AUIB can, at least partially, play an important, helpful, and probably strategic role to enrich, strengthen, and support Iraq's higher educational system. Through putting local university programs in alignment with established global academic standards on one side, while remaining attentive to local social and economic needs on the other side, AUIB represents a unique model of private higher education. Such model can basically function as a complementation to national public universities, rather than competing with them. Policymakers may therefore cooperate with such institutions as useful and supportive partners in the process of building and development of workforce, as well as, integration with international academic environment. Supporting regulatory agencies that administrate and implement the process of standard quality assurance, international accreditation systems, ethical standards, would clearly further support the contribution of universities like AUIB to planned goals of national development and progress. Furthermore, establishing an effective and functional cooperation between private universities, like AUIB, public institutions, and government agencies could contribute to the process of translating the educational discourse, into positive actual observable social and economic benefits.

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