Teaching Against Culture of Terrorism in the Middle East

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Abstract

This article focuses on the challenges of teaching under the threat of terrorism in the Middle East with Iraq as a model. It provides information about the recent situation of education in Iraq and activities of key Iraqi partners who oppose these threats. Absence of a comprehensive plan of development, regulation and rules to monitor working in laboratories is the major cause of chemical safety and security lacking in Iraq. Consequences are threatening the public; and the misuse is harmful or even lethal to a large number of people, and would certainly damage the institution, its programs, and reputation. The contribution of CRDF Global on behalf of the U.S. Department of State's Chemical Security Program (CSP) and Sandia National laboratory to build a productive relationship with academic, industrial, and government officials in Iraq was illustrated in terms of well-organized activities and actions with Iraqi faculty.

Keywords: Middle East, Teaching, Culture, Terrorism.

Introduction

Since the end of the 19th century, most profound and radical changes have come about in all aspects of life in the Middle East. The Arab literary renaissance that began over a hundred years ago, which was part of the general Arab awakening that was affecting various aspects of national life, is possibly the most momentous of these changes (Mikhail, 2004). Since September 11, 2001, it is imperative that students understand Islam, its multifarious religious and political manifestations, and the various perspectives on Middle East issues (Dunn, 2002). The world has witnessed a dramatic unfolding of events in the Middle East. Across the Arab world, people are raising their voices—and in some cases shaking off decades of dictatorship (Cortright and Reifenberg, 2012). Arab countries seem to be "richer than they are developed." The unfortunate state of social development in the region is coupled with poor political governance. Authoritarian regimes ranging from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco to the sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf, and chiefly Saudi Arabia (incidentally, most with close ties to the West), continue to frustrate demands for democracy and the rule of law, prompting (religious) opposition movements that espouse equally undemocratic, exclusive, and oft violent measures. Not surprisingly, the current conditions have caused much fear in the West about the international destabilizing ramifications of this seeming social and political stagnation (Bayat, 2010).

There is no doubt that the circumstances surrounding today's terrorist movements and the emergence of violence in Islamic societies, in particular, creates an unhealthy and dangerous environment. Islamic society deplores violence, extremism, and terrorist acts. To deter or eliminate these phenomena calls for cooperation throughout the middle-eastern countries, and terrorism must be attacked at its roots. It is essential to understand the various causes of terrorism in order to eliminate its manifestations (Al-Thagafi, 2008). When manipulated by extremists and absorbed by impressionable youth, certain political, socioeconomic, cultural, geopolitical, religious, and external forces exist in the Middle East that aids extremists' in their recruiting and fundraising activities. At the same time, and without trying to justify the extremists' activities, these same forces provide, to a certain extent, some rationalization for extremist activity (Young, 2009).

In the fight against terrorism, the Middle East has had the benefit of significant help from numerous countries, centers and institutes. In this battle with the enemies of our way of life, however, the active participation of Middle Eastern universities is singularly lacking, and while valuable professors and programs can sometimes be found in law departments, or in history and political science, the sad fact remains that the universities are a weak link in the Middle East's chain of defense against terror.

Like all sectors, unfortunately, today, Iraq's scientific and educational capabilities are behind. In addition, Iraq is still facing extraordinary circumstances and hence, education and knowledge advancement are needed for Iraq's stability, development and sustainable growth. Higher education and scientific and technological research and development are the base for any nations' advancement, development and creating a civilized culture. Therefore, an essential part of Iraq's development and sustainable growth in all sectors will be rebuilding its capacity in higher education if this part is well considered and considered.

The faculty, facilities (laboratories, workshops and chemicals) and the students are the essential parameters of rebuilding a developing country and today, they are subjected to recruitments by terrors or serve as fighters against destruction of civilization by securing their places. This article focuses on the challenges of teaching in the Middle East under recent threating of terrorism and efforts to develop a positive research culture.

Literature Review

Violence is in part the result of misleading religious concepts. It is an ultra-aggressive violation of some authentic Muslims who are completely different from the versions of Muslim politicians, scholars and ordinary people. All of these people want to live peacefully and get on in a modern world without extremist activities. This demands recognition that Islam can be spread by the sword in the 21st century, just as much as it was in the 7th

The violence is also rooted in the political culture of Iraq and Syria, the countries from which ISIS has sprung. The extremes to which ISIS' "Caliph," Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, and his predecessors have gone with Westerners has brought this culture to an international public, but they merely reflect what these countries' leaders, and to some extent what their colonial predecessors have been doing for decades.

The foreign opposition to the multi-national forces in Iraq mainly comes from citizens of nearby Muslim countries with repressive regimes. Economic circumstances in the origin country of foreign fighters do not seem to be a particularly important predictor variable.

ISIL, which is the successor to Al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI), has undermined stability in Iraq, Syria and the broader Middle East through its terrorist acts and crimes against humanity, and poses an immediate threat to international peace and security (Evans, 2014). Prior to ISIL's expansion of territorial control in parts of Iraq and Syria, the group (and its predecessor, AQI) benefitted from a network of associates in Syria, which it used to facilitate travel to Iraq (Levitt, 2010). Currently, the well-recognized modus operandi of the group shows their followers that they have the strength and ruthlessness to lead. But as with everything ISIS does, there was a twist. The group launched a lightning advance through northern and central Iraq in June, 2014 declaring an Islamic caliphate (Salman and Holmes 2014). Most of the followers, who were recruited by ISIS in Iraq, are non-working young people, students or even faculty members from villages and countries. The number of followers is increasing under the current situation of Iraqi decaying economy, conflict of diverse authentic groups and a clannish communities in absence of conciliation efforts among cultures and certain actions to develop a unified culture of honesty and responsibility.

Linkages between higher education institutions and regional community are of paramount importance to sustain cultural development and build a modern country. These linkages are critical to the task of supporting broader societal goals, fueling the creation of knowledge, securing thoughts from extremists, advancing research, and educating a new generation of leaders able to engage in the global knowledge economy but also steeped in their own cultural and linguistic traditions. In the Middle East and North Africa, these linkages have been less developed and have not effectively served the broader goals of society. There is a growing recognition that Arab higher education systems should focus more on improving the "relevance" of their services in terms of knowledge and research and in linking them to the labor market and economic development (Mahmud, 2013).

With all these complex conditions, teaching in Middle Eastern countries is a challenging task. How can universities reflect the culture of being against terrorism and serve as a center of spreading the culture of being against violation, while some students and faculties are a serious threatening due to their extreme beliefs? Therefore, the university campus has become more security conscious, and that awareness extends to classes, where concepts of terrorism could be spread, and laboratories, where explosive and toxic material could be used or prepared for attack the safe zones even in the university.

Culture of terrorism in the classroom

Presently, threats to security on the civil community are considered in the context of cultural terrorism. Since September 11, 2001 a new approach to dealing with terrorism has

been introduced. In this approach, young people were instrumentalized for the new purpose of terrorism outside of their countries. Since global terrorism stems from the Middle East, exploring the correlation between regional issues and new terrorism is of great importance. If new terrorists are conceived in the region, one needs to consider the unique cultural and religious characteristics which frame it on the one hand; and the systemic approach for dealing with these issues on the other. Due to lack in youth centers, civil organizations and cultural societies, the university is the most important center of spreading cultures in Iraq, especially to students with extreme religious beliefs. There are a number of cases report of extreme faculty used their authority to spread fanaticism in the classroom or mosques in Iraq.

The current policies of the universities in the Middle East should be modified, because they tend to ignore the threat posed by new terrorism in which young students are enlisted as terrorist soldiers. Thus these institutions may serve as a threat too, or an opportunity for terrorism, in society. The people living in Salah Al-Din province serve as an example on ground: it is a complex of urban and peasant people. The history of this province, in terms of politics, is interesting as it is the birth place of the former president Sadam Hussain. Urban people suffered from persecution after 30 years of authoritarianism and prosperity and they are believe in the inevitability of change and living with the other people safely and equally. On contrary, the country or peasant people are seizing the opportunity to be against the urban and the tribe of the former president and earn a post with the government. They are trying all the time to compensate for their low values and lack of education and ethics by catching with high post and authority.

Though largely below the surface, this cultural and materialistic conflict were used by fanatic and uneducated groups in the province. They were always waiting and looking for a prominence chance. Their sons are highly abided by the mores of the fathers although they are learning different ethics and culture in the university. They are guided by their extreme tendency to control the province and find a post of power for each in spite of their low credentials. In this culture, many want to be a leader with power and money even if he turns into a murder, with a sword or a gun, enforces people to follow his way in life. The most challenging task is to change their way in thinking because they are hiding their convictions and thoughts about urban people and society. Professors are incapable of mending this hidden culture and deal with hidden believers. Besides, it is forbidden in Iraqi universities to discuss the conflicts of cultures and weakness of government to build a unified community. Thus, the professors have to convince themselves that they have no serious threat or even a challenges in their classes and they can continue in a routine way of teaching and learning life! The security officers are in a big challenge as well. They have a lot of uncertain information about extremist of students and teachers, but they are in capable of hindering them due to the power of their tribes or threatening by those extremists.

One of the 56 documented attacks on school and universities buildings during 2009-2012 is an attack on Iraqi police man studying at Tikrit University by a person wearing a student dress. The investigations resulted in a fact that the bombing materials were hided inside the university land and used to kill the police man. Many recorded fracases caused by ethics or categorical conflicts between students or groups of students resulted in bad injuries. The teachers are subjected to serious harassment on public or academic social networking. Their personal life, behaviors and style of teaching due to the lack of regulations and rules organized the relation between student and teacher in academia against such skinhead behaviors of country students.

According to all these observations, the academia needs an essential change toward a solid education environment starts with regulations and well organized plan to build a civilized forum inside classroom or on academic social networking.

Challenges with Chemical Security

The universities in Syria and Iraq have become more security conscious, and that awareness extends to laboratories. New guidelines and approaches, driven by legislation and regulation— to say nothing of common sense—are promulgated every year over the world to implement chemical security everywhere. A laboratory security system is put in place to mitigate a number of risks and is complementary to existing laboratory security policies. In very broad terms, laboratory security keeps people secure from chemicals violence, and keeps chemicals safe from people. We have to raise awareness of the issue. Risks to laboratory security include

- theft or diversion of chemicals, biologicals, and radioactive or proprietary materials (such materials could be stolen from the laboratory, diverted or intercepted in transit between supplier and laboratory, at a loading dock, or at a stockroom, and then sold or used, directly or as precursors, in weapons or manufacture of illicit substances);
- theft or diversion of mission-critical or high-value equipment;
- threats from activist groups;
- intentional release of, or exposure to, hazardous materials;
- sabotage or vandalism of chemicals or high-value equipment;
- loss or release of sensitive information; and
- rogue work or unauthorized laboratory experimentation.

The type and extent of the security system needed depends on several factors, including:

- known and recognized threats gleaned from the experience of other laboratories, institutions, or firms;
- history of theft, sabotage, vandalism, or violence directed at or near the laboratory, institution, or firm;
- presence of valuable or desirable materials, equipment, technology, or information;
- intelligence regarding groups or individuals who pose a general threat to the discipline or a specific threat to the institution;
- regulatory requirements or guidance.

The expertise behind the chemical security in Iraq owes much to some of U.S Department of State efforts called the Chemical Security Program (CSP), which enables many Iraqi scientists to participate in grants and fellowships in U.S where chemical safety and security (CSS) regulations are implemented. The U.S government is stepping up such effort, which aims to restore the intellectual capital that Iraq will need to rebuild and remain secure against different kinds of terrorism. This kind of engagement is powerful and effective. The potential universities to the north of Iraq, such as Tikrit University, have the chance to benefit from these supports. They sent many of the faculty members, which were under years of sectarian violence, to U.S and other countries to explore techniques and improve their skills. The grants and the fellowships of CSP attracted the best of the best and the results were extraordinary regarding the implementation of chemical safety and security concepts. The Iraqi participants in those opportunities have reflected their experience by leading series of workshops in their universities. These workshops offered essential insights into the challenges faced by Iraqi faculty courses to apply safety and security concepts in their universities.

Currently, the major issue is security. The Islamic state group advance in northern Iraq has crippled efforts to control all the chemical stores and mechanical workshops at the universities. This issue seemed to demand further efforts, as there is a significant lack in implementation of security concepts and the required resources. A practical example emerged

during Tikrit city invasion in June 11th, 2014 was the unsuccessful attempt of ISIS to find the chemical stores in Tikrit University campus. Tikrit University, via the guidance and expertise of CSP fellows in the university, was able to reallocate chemicals to a secure stores and use secure cabinets with digital locks in these stores. After retaking Tikrit city in April, 2015 and till now the chemical stores remain secure and all chemicals are ready to use by the faculty and students in the University.

It became clear that the Iraqi faculty and researchers, after 2003, have a growing ability to learn and create. Figure 1 shows a dramatic increase of publications in Iraq. However, terrorist attacks increase in a parallel growth as shown in Figure 2. The credential of Iraqi scientists should reflect on their community and contribute in a social development. Into this correspondence, the initiatives of CSS in Iraqi universities have to identify effective strategies to support the critical task of securing Iraqi institutions of higher learning. Lack of protection, weakness in university administration and planning have dissuaded university initiatives from applying what they had learned from CSP. As anyone in the world must know, Iraq's once mighty universities are under siege by various forces of chaos - not just the scourge of ISIS, but also fear and apathy in modern society.
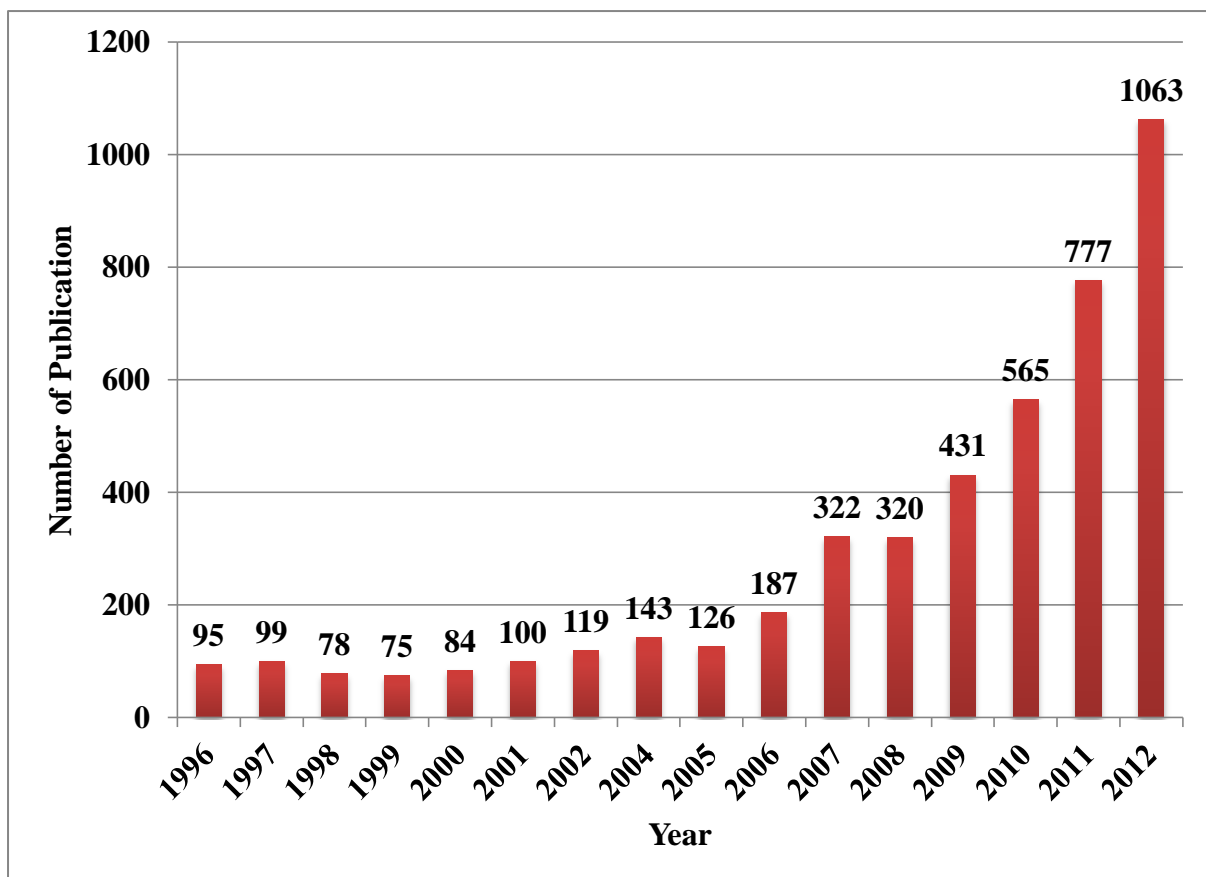

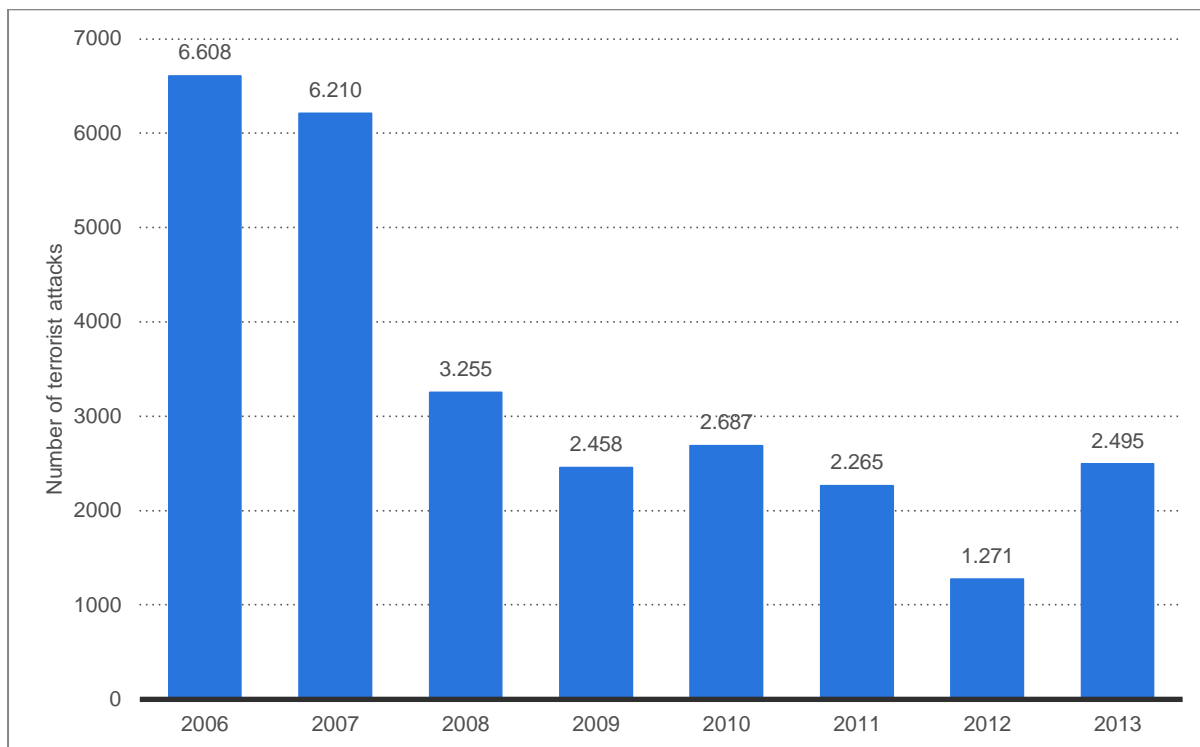Figure 1. Development of publication in Iraqi academia after 2003

Figure 2. Increasing of terrorists attack after 2003 in Iraqi

Contribution of CSP, US Department of State

Promising efforts had started in 2011 to build a solid infrastructure of CSS in terms of developing skills of potential human resource in Iraqi universities. Numerous partners had contributed in preparation of successful workshops on CSS, Chemical Security Program (CSP), Sandia National Laboratories (SNL), Arab Science and Technology Foundation (ASTF), in conjunction with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Iraq (Picture 1). The workshops were combination of quantative and qualitative methods of handling chemicals in laboratories, stores and field. Various kinds of informations, cases studies and tutorials were presented by experts of CSS. Visits to local university laboratories focused on issues and real case studies with the purpose of finding solutions to improve future practices in chemical laboratories.

Now, after 4 years of spreading culture of CSS among Iraqi universities complex questions arise when discussing how to utilize the base and initiatives of CSS in Iraq to enhance practical application of CSS concepts in laboratories and stores. For example, are they authorized to apply what they had learned? How can they get approval from the administration of the university to monitor worker in laboratories? Is there any physical resources to apply CSS concepts?

Picture .1. Participants from Iraqi universities in a CSP workshop. Malaysia. October 2014

Based on long history of working with the Iraq government, there is a bad experience about joint project with international organization after 2003. Although CSP has a very clear plan to build and improve capacity of faculty via series of workshops with a sequential topics, Iraqi universities have used to send different faculty member every time to participate in this series. They are handling this participation as an opportunity to learn general information and spend good time during traveling outside Iraq whereas this series requires participation of the same faculty member to build his capacity progressively. Thus, while building capacity of Iraqi faculty is a critical need, building capacity of university administrators is an issue. The key is working with a good administration of a university. This requirement supports the crucial need of integration in building of Iraqi universities, a systematic building of capacities is required for administration and staff along with classrooms, laboratories and offices. In other words, a comprehensive plan of building and development is required, which is missing in Iraqi universities.

The current situation of Iraqi laboratories reveals weakness of investment in financial and human resources. The consensus during CSP workshops that the informations they have learned are very helpful in applying CSS concepts in laboratories and chemical stores, and the universities are not lacking financial resources to supply safety and security instruments. However, they do not have an authority to start actions in their universities. The former president John F. Kennedy expound upon this complex situation, commenting "To make your place Secure you need Leadership and Power", leadership for planning and power for implantation. For example, Baghdad University- ranks first in Iraq- does not have even a unit for CSS, though many of the participants during the last four years were from Baghdad University. Those participants are lacking authority to start their actions and they found out that voluntary work will not change much in the laboratories. The administrative unit of CSS can help stitch up whatever resources and skills the university have earned. Thus, Iraqi CSS's initiatives, inside and outside Iraq, intuits the urgent need to establish a unit in each university to fill the gap of authority and give the participants an illegal access to the laboratories. Now,

after series of workshops focused on spreading culture of CSS and planning to start administrative actions 28 participants have succeeded in establishing units of CSS in their universities. Currently and in continuation of its support with its participants in Iraqi universities and academic institutions, and with the support of US Department of State, Sandia National laboratories and Pacific Northern National Laboratories, CSP plans to co-organize series of technical and assessment workshops focused on the operations of Iraqi university department's Chemical Safety and Security Units. The objectives of these workshops are to re-engage participants on the topics of CSS that were discussed during the last years with CSP, facilitate the development of department-specific academic laboratory CSS benchmarks that will be overseen by the department units and to work with participants to understand operational plans and roles and responsibilities, and develop appropriate standard operating procedures related to laboratory inspection and /or other Unit operations as well as responsibilities and actions to be completed by Unit members upon their return to their universities. These will be reinforced through laboratory demonstrations and excises as well as post exercise reports. A long term work is proceeding have been started to integrate each Unit into a national framework capable of recommending and implementing chemical safety and security measures for Iraq as a whole has yet to begin. Along with theseefforts of establishing the Unit, parallel efforts have been started to establish the first center of CSS in Iraq at Babylon University. This center will serve as a permanent regional training center of trainers for Iraqi universities and will facilitate the development of work to implement a national framework for chemical safety and security into which biological and radiological experts can integrate at a future date to be determined. Through this partnership with CSP, the Iraqi CSS initiatives seek to provide seed culture to a diverse range of academic activities and technical collaboration on CSS in Iraqi institutions. This culture is growing up all over the academic institutions and the initiatives are working on long term and well planned activities to promote successful models of authorized structures that are responsible of sustaining the growth of CSS culture. The pivotal role of the university in creation of CSS culture in Iraqi has been studied by Hussain (Hussain, 2015). He illustrated several considerations that made this issue of great importance:

1 A university is highly considered and trusted by the community in Iraq. Thus, they initiatives are relying on this consideration and trust to make the developed roles and responsibilities by the university prevailed over the community.

2- Universities are qualified, trustworthy and convincing centers that they can disseminate culture safety and chemical security in the community.

3 -At present, one can rarely find a city without a university; therefore, it is quite easy to disseminate all information related to the safety and security of chemicals across the world.

4- Within the community, they are large number of academic staff, administrative staff and students. Through those members, spreading of CSS culture will be easier than enrolling large number of citizens in CSS workshops.

5- University graduates are usually employed by institutions in different sectors and in the same city where the university is located. These sectors such as industry, agriculture, health and others often deal directly with chemicals.

6- Most universities deal with chemicals, biological and radioactive materials directly and even some of them prepare some of these materials. Thus, the university is the most reliable institution that can determine the risk of any of these materials and take all precautions for the safety and security from them.

Conclusion

Chemical Safety and Security in Iraq after 2003 pose many challenges. It is concluded from the present study that a key partner is required from each university in Iraq, who should promote models of CSS activities on campuses in order to enhance tolerance and a peaceful learning environment. The models of activities will be focused on building scientific-based approaches to countering violent extremism and motivate the academic and social communities. These activities need support from the government in terms of approving the establishment of units, departments or centers and prompt support of the initiatives and their activities.

Although the Iraqi government is supporting different programs and projects such as offering a reasonable budget to hire faculty members, supplying materials and instrumentation, construction of new building, and sending thousands of students outside Iraq to earn bachelor, master and doctorate degrees, they are weak in the integration of these efforts to improve the outcomes. The key is the leader in the university, the owner of power and authority, who has no leadership and lacks vision of comprehensive development. Along with sending staff to earn degrees from the outside, they should start improving the current situation of the academic institutions inside the country. The professional investment of resources, human and financial, requires a well-integrated plan of development. Although, there is a remarkable limitation of independency of the Iraqi universities, the leaders can do a lot under their current authority. The positive outcomes of following a plan of development are able to inspire the community to join these efforts and improve their way of thinking and tackling with recent problems of violence and terrorism. Thus, safety and security will spread from Iraqi universities to Iraqi culture.

The mission should be a national endeavor because the threat of violence is not limited to a city or a university, but to all of Iraq. What happened in June 10t, 2014 will determine whether the Iraqi universities can maintain a culture of building and improving peace and influence in the community. At this critical juncture, the initiatives of safety and security should get support to develop their voluntary activities to an official daily work of improvement under the protection of government. Without power, they are unable to apply the concepts, and without the leadership the government will lose more people, because of uncontrolled actions of extremists, along with a lot of money due to a vague vision of leading. Currently, one of the most crucial tasks for the leader is to foster creative activities of initiatives and the relationships between the U.S. organization and Iraqi universities. Indeed, they are not lacking resources but the absence of a scientific plan to resolve problems and tackle with challenges is remarkable. Some promising outcomes are achieved in Iraqi universities via the partnership of Chemical Security Program with some active universities like Babylon and Tikrit. This partnership has merged and reorganized the local and international efforts to improve chemical safety and security in Iraqi universities. The mission is to extend the university resources and achievements to the Iraqi community.

Acknowledgement

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