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By:

*Thanaa Sulaiman*

Has been reviewed and approved by the thesis committee.

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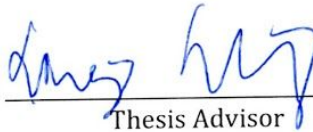
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**EDUCATION AS COUNTER TERRORISM IN IRAQ**

**BY**

**THANAA SULAIMAN**

**MASTER'S THESIS**

**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Valparaiso University**

**Valparaiso Indiana in the United States of America**

**In partial fulfillment of the requirements**

**For the degree of**

**MASTER'S OF ARTS**

**May 2017**

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To the victims of terrorism in Iraq.....

### **Abstract**

There is not much research written about the relationship between education and the rise of terrorism. Some scholars have urged for educative response to end terrorism (Krueger and Maleckova, 2003; Brockhoff et al., 2015; Malazada, 2016; *Illiteracy rates drop in Iraq: Government*, 2014) In his study, Brockhoff et al., (2015) found that when country specific factors like the economic situation and political representation were unfavorable, education is the reason some individuals become terrorists. Abrifor (2008) concluded that abuse of students in Nigeria lead them to get involved in criminal activities, suicide bombing and terrorism. In light of these studies, it is legitimate to think that the problems facing the Iraqi educational system and the low quality of education are the main causes that fuel terrorism. Every Iraqi citizen knows that education in Iraq is deteriorating. However, the governments of Iraq have not tried to improve the educational system to make it resistant to terrorism.

This study tries to find out if the Iraqi citizens who studied their whole life in the Iraqi educational system and who have suffered or know someone who have suffered from terrorism think that education in Iraq is responsible for the spread of terrorism in the country. The study also aims to find out if the respondents think that improving the educational system in Iraq can potentially exterminate terrorism from the country. Additionally, the study tries to find out the main issues that Iraqi education policymakers need to address so that education can be used as counterterrorism. For the study, a survey was used as the main method of data collection. The survey was posted on Facebook groups and 666 respondents answered it. The study found that most of respondents think that there is a relationship between education and terrorism in Iraq. The study also found that most of respondents think that improving the Iraqi educational system can exterminate terrorism in Iraq. In addition to that, the study found that the majority of

respondents think that Iraqi educational system must be improved and unified to introduce students to different point of views, religions, and cultures, be inclusive and secular to promote pluralism in the country, and stop using or teaching about violence in schools. Furthermore, respondents favored that the goals of education must be given importance not the curriculum itself and that critical thinking is taught to help students be able to think objectively before adopting certain ideology. An important issue that the study found is that the majority of respondents think that history and Islamic education must be modified and their books must be rewritten to include other religions and ethnic groups in the country.

This study suggests that the educational system in Iraq must be improved as soon as possible to tackle the issue of terrorism. The Iraqi educational system must be modified to be secular and inclusive. Islamic Education must be changed into either “Citizenship Education or Teaching about Religions” that many countries around the world have adopted. Therefore, it is important that teaching religion becomes non-denominational so that all students can feel welcomed and equal in the classroom.



## **Education as counter terrorism in Iraq**

<b>Dedication .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Table of contents .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.1 Rationale .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.2 Statement of Purpose .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.3 Outline of the Study .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Literature review .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2.1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2.2 The relationship between Education and Terrorism .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>2.3 The Iraqi educational system and its Characteristics .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>2.4 Religious Education.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>2.5 Problems Facing Education in Iraq .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>2.5.1 Lack of schools.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>2.5.2 Use of rote memorization .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>2.5.3 Use of violence .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>2.5.4 Lack of training for teachers in using modern educational methods .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>2.5.5 Illiteracy .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Method.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>3.1 Framework .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>3.2 Research questions .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>3.3 Procedure .....</b>	<b>47</b>

<b>3.4 Participants .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>4.1 Findings .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>4.2 Discussion .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>4.2.1 Introduce students to different points of views, cultures, and religions.....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>4.2.2 Unify the educational systems to be inclusive, secular, neutral and promote pluralism in the country .....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>4.2.3 Stop promoting the culture of violence in the curriculum and Exterminate the use of violence .....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>4.2.4 Think of the goals of education rather than the curriculum itself and Use of different curriculum designs and frameworks to achieve these goals.....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>4.2.5 Use of critical thinking .....</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>4.2.6 Freedom to choose from a variety of books .....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Chapter 5: Conclusion .....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>5.1 Overview .....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>5.2 Future implications .....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>5.3 Limitations .....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Reference .....</b>	<b>86</b>

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This study examines how Iraqis perceive the educational system in their country and its relationship to the spread of terrorism. Terrorism is a major problem in the world today that affects almost every country in the world. The scholarship is divided when it comes to the relationship between education and terrorism. Brockhoff, Krieger & Meierrieks (2015) found that terrorism can be caused by education. Abrifor (2008) found that abuse in schools, especially corporal punishment, leads student to be violent and get involved in terrorist activities. The use of corporal punishment is still very common in Iraqi schools. Being severely affected by terrorism, Iraq has always reacted to terrorism with military force. Successive Iraqi governments neglected education and none of these governments have tried to improve the educational system to make it resistant to extremism and make Iraqis more open-minded, accepting, and aware of others' and their rights to live peacefully.

This study suggests that education is responsible for the rise of terrorism. Education in Iraq produces students who are indoctrinated to only one ideology. This makes many people ignorant to others' right as equal citizens and even willing to violently strip others from their rights. The finding of this study suggests that the Iraqi educational system must be improved and the educational policy must be directed to raise a generation that sees peace as the best solution for problems facing them and their country. This can be achieved by introducing a new curriculum that is based on either Citizenship Education or Teaching about Religions. The curriculum must be rewritten to erase any mentioning to passages that encourage or promote violence in history books. In addition to that, the Iraqi educational system must aim to respect students and their autonomy to think independently and not to be stopped violently.

### 1.1 Rationale

Education is a very important aspect of life. Freire (1998) defined education as “human act of intervening in the world” (p. 6). This means that education mainly aims to improve people's lives. As the world is suffering from terrorism, it is important that education is used as an intervention to prevent the spread of terrorism. Countries which are affected by terrorism more than others must take further steps to improve their educational systems. As Iraq is at the frontline against terrorism, the country needs to take a bold step to investigate the reasons why some of its citizens choose to join or take side with terrorist groups.

The relationship between education and terrorism is not clear (Brockhoff et al, 2015; Krueger and Maleckova, 2003) Some scholars argue that terrorism is the result of a bad economic situation or injustices committed against people (Krueger and Maleckova, 2003) Brockhoff et al. (2015) stated that the relationship between education and terrorism is looked at in terms of the pessimistic and optimistic views. The pessimistic view states that increase in education can increase terrorism. In other words, educated individuals tend to join terrorist groups than uneducated individuals. The optimistic view states that increase in education leads to decrease in terrorism as it leads to less hatred and give individuals better opportunities in life. In either case, the quality of education is what matter. If the educational system is based on respecting human rights and diversity, it may not lead to terrorism even with bad economic situation and lack of political representation. But if the educational system encourages and promotes disrespect and ignorance toward others and uses physical and psychological abuse, it may lead some individuals to resort to criminal activity or terrorism (Abrifor, 2008). Therefore, it is important to look at the educational system in the country and how it may foster terrorism.

It is possible that one reason some Iraqis choose to take side with the terrorists is that they were indoctrinated in a way to believe and respect only one ideology. When these individuals saw that their ideology is being attacked by “others”, their only way to defend their ideology is to violently silence the “enemy”. If these same individuals were taught in an environment that encourages and supports diversity and pluralism, these individuals could have taken a completely different path in life. Therefore, countries fighting terrorism on all fronts must improve their educational system as it may have defect that leads some individuals to become terrorists (Deasy, 2011). It is also important to listen to citizens and what they think about the relationship between education and terrorism which this study aims to achieve. Therefore, it will be beneficial for Iraq to liberate the educational system from the mono-ideology that has governed it since its establishment.

### **1.2 Statement of Purpose**

This study aims to investigate the relationship between education and terrorism. Some studies have pointed out that terrorism might be caused by education (Abrifor, 2008; Brockhoff et al., 2015) These studies are supported by some thinkers and politicians who think that education is partly responsible for the spread of terrorism (Brockhoff et al., 2015; Malazada, 2016; *Illiteracy rates drop in Iraq*: Government, 2014). Since Iraqi is at the frontline in the fight against terrorism, an objective study is needed to investigate the Iraqi educational system and see if it helps in the spread of terrorism. Iraq has suffered from many problems caused by wars, economic sanctions, and insurgency in the last four decades (Samarai, 2007). Education was severely affected as many schools were destroyed and the quality of education deteriorated as the Successive governments did not try to improve it.

To better understand the relationship between education and terrorism, more studies need to be conducted specially to find out what the public thinks. Therefore, it is important that Iraqi people who have suffered from terrorism more than any other people and who studied in this educational system are asked about their opinions about the relationship between education and terrorism. This study aims to find out such a relationship. Such study will help understand what steps are needed to make education function as anti-terrorism. The result of the study shows that there is a relationship between education and terrorism in Iraq. Therefore, it suggests that the Iraqi educational system needs to be improved to address issues like teaching diversity and difference in points of view, eradicating teaching and using violence against students. The study also suggest that the curriculum must be modified or a new curriculum must be introduced that is based on either Citizenship Education or Teaching about Religions.

### **1.3 Outline of the Study**

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter one presents the introduction that includes the rationale, the statement of purpose and the outline of the study. Chapter two presents the literature review. The literature review presents what scholarship has been written about education and terrorism. It also presents an overview of the Iraqi educational system and its characteristics which is vital to understand how it might be the cause of the spread of terrorism in the country. In addition to that, the main problems that face the Iraqi educational system are presented. Chapter three presents the method of the study which was through a survey. It also includes the framework of the study, the questions, and the participants. Chapter four presents the findings and discussions of the study. It also includes the main issues that need to be addressed in order to use education as counter terrorism in Iraq. Chapter five presents the conclusion of the study, the future implications, and the limitations of the study.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

The purpose of this chapter is to look at the scholarship about the relationship between terrorism and education. This chapter also offers an overview about the Iraqi educational system, its characteristics and the problems that affect it. It is very important to be informed about the Iraqi educational system as it gives an idea why it might help fuel terrorism. It also helps to inform readers about an educational system that is rarely researched.

### **2.1 Introduction**

Terrorism is a major problem that faces many countries around the world. When talking about the issue of terrorism and its relationship to education, researchers and scholars do not agree. Brockhoff, et al., (2015) said that terrorism can also be the result of political and economic factors besides education. But some thinkers and politicians insist that education is responsible on the raise of violence and terrorism in the world. According to Godovicová (2012), it is not easy to decide about the main reasons of terrorism. In Iraq, the economic and political situation is so bad that it can lead some people to join terrorist groups. Some people are very angry and feel that they are underrepresented in both economics and politics, therefore they join terrorist groups.

Education in Iraq is compulsory until sixth class. It is free from kindergarten till higher education for all Iraqi (*Education in Iraq between the past and the present*, n.d). A prominent feature of education in Iraq is teaching religion. Religious education is taught in public schools and religious schools. Non-muslim students are exempted by law from attending religion classes and taking the test for religious classes (Barany, 2013). Religious education has become very popular after 2004 because Iraqis were looking for a source of power to protect them and religion gave them that power (Hanish, 2007).

The Iraqi educational system suffered a lot due to wars and economic sanctions (Samarai, 2007). One of the main problems that the Iraqi educational system suffers from is school shortages. Iraqi governments have spent millions of dollars but few schools were built which is caused by corruption. Another problem is that the instruction in Iraqi schools is mainly rote memorization (Mohammed-Marzouk, 2012). This negatively affects education and makes people vulnerable to join terrorist and criminal groups as they are not able to think rationally (Paul, 1990). Failing to memorize the materials often leads teachers to punish students. Punishment takes different forms, but the most common is corporal or physical punishment. Corporal punishment is widely used in many educational systems around the world (Abrifor, 2008). Iraq in schools, the use of corporal punishment is so deep rooted that almost every student has experienced it in their time at school. Studies have shown that corporal punishment can have negative effects on students (Abrifor, 2008; Ekanem & Edet, 2013; Ba-Saddik & Hattab, 2013; Mncube and Netshitangani, 2014). The use of rote memorization as the only method of instruction and the use of corporal punishment can be eradicated by training teachers to use different methods of teaching to keep students engaged. Teachers also need to be trained how to use different types of achieving discipline and never resort to violence. Unfortunately, teachers do not get any training before they start their teaching careers. Another problem that threatens education and society in Iraq is illiteracy. Although Iraq achieved high rates of literacy in the 1970s and 1980s, the Iraqi educational system deteriorated after that. The current Iraqi government must address the issue as soon as possible. Addressing all these problems can potentially decrease terrorism since some people resort to terrorism because they lack opportunities in life.



Iraq has been severely affected by terrorism especially in recent years. Terrorists in Iraq are either Iraqi citizens or foreign terrorists. Most of the time, Iraqi governments have responded with military force to the issue of terrorism. Successive governments have not tried to find other solutions to stop extremism among young people. Although education can be a good solution to terrorism, Iraqi governments have not paid any attention to it. Education has been left suffering from the impact of wars and economic problem. Therefore, this study was conducted to find out if education in Iraq can cause terrorism. The study found out that the majority of respondents think that education causes terrorism in Iraq. It also found out that improving the Iraqi educational system can exterminate terrorism. Furthermore, the study offers a set of suggestions that need to be addressed to improve the Iraqi educational system.

An important issue is that traditional methods of instruction must be substituted with more modern methods of instruction. Students can be taught to enhance their critical thinking ability instead of only memorize texts. Many scholars stated that it is important to teach critical thinking to students (Sarigoz, 2012; Snyder & Snyder, 2008). Bailin (1993) stated that critical thinking can be better taught along other traditional subjects and not on its own. This can be easily done in Iraqi schools. Teachers can teach all school subjects to foster students' critical thinking ability through inquiry-based learning. Therefore, it is very important that school subjects are not taught simply to be memorized. Instead, they can be taught to be more open minded and aware of issues in their environment. This has to be backed with changing assessment in Iraqi schools. Instead of summative assessment, Iraqi teachers can move toward formative assessment and performance-based assessments that help students transfer what they learn to their real life and give teachers the chance to observe their students' learning and development. This can make teachers less authoritarians and students more motivated (Sultan &

Hussain, 2012). Students can also be encouraged to come up with a product like presentations, class debates and papers that shows they are learning something beneficial (Espinosa, 2015).

Since Iraq is transitioning into democracy and freedom of speech. It is important that schools practice this freedom too. The Iraqi Ministry of Education must allow teachers and students to have freedom to choose the books they want to study. The Ministry of Education can offer a variety of books and leave the choice up to teachers and students. This will make these students more open to democracy as educated individuals tend to have more political participation (Castello-Climent, 2008; Lutz, et al.,2010). Giving students and their teachers the freedom of choice will automatically help introduce them to different points of view. When students negotiate the books they want to read, they will be introduced to others' points of view. The Iraqi Ministry of Education must include books about the different religions and ethnic groups in the country. Iraq is a multiethnic and multi-religious country, but these different ethnicities and religions are not represented in education (Barany, 2013). Learning about other groups will make students more open-minded and more aware about other groups in the country.

To use education as counter terrorism, it is important to change the educational policy in Iraq to address certain issues. Goals or standards must be introduced to the Iraqi educational system so that the educational policy in the country is directed to help in the transition toward democracy. This must be coupled with the extermination of corporal punishment. As it is stated earlier, corporal punishment is still widely practiced by Iraqi teachers. Unfortunately, teachers do not follow the law that prohibits physical punishment because it is still socially acceptable. Studies have warned about the negative impact of using corporal punishments (Abrifor, 2008; Ekanem & Edet, 2013; Ba-Saddik & Hattab, 2013; Mncube and Netshitangani, 2014). Abrifor

(2008) even linked it to terrorism saying that children who are physically abused might resort to criminal activities or terrorism.

Iraq has many sub-educational systems beside public education. These sub-educational systems are either based on ethnic languages like Kurdish, Turkmen and Syriac or on religious sects like Shi'a or Sunni. Unlike public schools, schools affiliated with one of the sub educational systems are not open to all students equally. Therefore, only students who belong to the ethnic groups or religious sect can study in these schools. It is important that all students are accepted in these schools. A better solution would be to unify these sub systems into the public schools. These schools can still offer the same subjects but at the same time move toward shared education. Shared education, though it was not always successful, can ease conflicts (Baumann, 2013). In this case, students will not feel isolated or segregated against. At the same time, shared education can lead to a generation aware and open-minded toward people different from them.

## **2.2 The relationship between Education and Terrorism**

Holmes and Holmes (1994) define terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence, perpetrated against noncombatant targets by substantial groups or clandestine state agents usually to influence an audience" (p. 130, cited in Mooney, & Young, 2005: 114). This clearly shows that terrorism can be any act of violence that is politically motivated and either carried by militants of state agents. In other words, terrorists create violence to achieve certain outcomes. Often religion, ethnicity, and political ideology fuel terrorism. When the United States was attacked by Al Qaeda in September 11, 2001, many famous people, thinkers, and ordinary people thought that education can solve the problem of terrorism (Brockhoff et al, 2015; Lee, 2011). One of these thinkers is Eli Wiesel, who won the 1986 Nobel Peace Prize laureate. Wiesel

argued that “What is it that seduces some young people to terrorism? It simplifies things. The fanatic has no questions, only answers. Education is the way to eliminate terrorism” (Brockhoff et al., 2015, p. 1187). Brockhoff *et al.* (2015) support this claim by saying that there are two main views about the relationship between education and terrorism which are the optimistic and pessimistic. The optimistic view thinks that education has pacifying effects on societies (Brockhoff et al, 2015). This is true when the educational system promotes peace, dialogue and acceptance of others. The pessimistic view expects that increase in education leads to increase in terrorism. This can be true when the educational system is corrupt, exclusive and promotes hate and violence in a way that leads more people to adopt extremist’s views. Therefore, it can be said that education can either stop or trigger terrorism.

In their empirical study, Brockhoff et al, (2015) examined the relationship between education and terrorism in 133 countries including Iraq between the years 1984 and 2007. They found a positive relationship between education and terrorism on the national level especially when country-specific conditions are negative (Brockhoff et al, 2015). Therefore, to determine whether there is a relationship between education and terrorism, they looked at both education and other factors like the economic and political situation. They found that when these factors are favorable and education is low, it leads to more terrorism. At the same time when education increases but with better socioeconomic, political, and social conditions, terrorism tends to be less. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the impact of education on terrorism without looking at country-specific factors. The results of this study clearly indicate that for any country which is trying to exterminate terrorism, they must improve both educational and country-specific factors. Krueger and Maleckova (2003) also stated that it is very difficult to find the relationship between

poverty, education and terrorism. They stated that oftentimes terrorism is a response to the injustices committed against people.

For many scholars, the relationship between education and terrorism is not clear (Brockhoff et al, 2015; Krueger and Maleckova, 2003). Abrifor (2008) hinted that using physical punishment against secondary school students in Nigeria can risk the future of the entire nation. Abrifor (2008) thinks that its failure can lead students, when they become adults, to “involve themselves in anti-social activities such as cultism, child suicide bombing, and Successively terrorism that is currently disturbing global peace” (Abrifor, 2008, p. 319) Therefore, educational practices must be changed to avoid such tragic results. Although some scholars do not agree that education causes terrorism, it does not matter which side wins. What matters is how education can be used as counter terrorism. This can be easily achieved if the Iraqi educational system is changed to be more peaceful and promotes acceptance of others no matter how different they are. It can also be achieved when violence is not taught or promoted and not used against students. But on the opposite, students are encouraged to have their own voice.

In Iraq, religious beliefs mainly cause terrorism. There are many reasons for the spread of terrorism in Iraq. However, it is very hard to decide about the main reasons of terrorism (Godovicová, 2012). But, the causes of terrorism might be political, economic and even educational (Krueger & Maleckova, 2003). In Iraq, terrorism first started with the American invasion of the country in 2003. Then, it spread more during the sectarian conflict in 2006. But unfortunately, it reached its climax in 2014 with the rise of ISIS. The main reason for the influx of terrorists to the country was to fight the American troops. Unfortunately, these terrorists have left their ideology behind them. With the political instability, political inequality and extremist religious ideology, a new generation of Iraqi terrorists appeared. These were the main terrorists

who led the fight against the Iraqi authorities from 2014 till now. These people were easily recruited because their environment is encouraging. These same terrorists went to Iraq public schools. Iraqi deputy prime minister for Service Affairs Saleh al-Mutlaq stated that education is the main reason behind terrorism and extremism in the country (*Illiteracy rates drop in Iraq: Government*, 2014). If the education they received was resistant against terrorism and fundamentalism, the situation in Iraq would have been much better. In fact, Peters (2005) noted that the issue of terrorism is educational by nature and education can be the best way to win young people's minds.

One reason that makes education responsible for the spread of terrorism and violence in the Middle East is the way information is taught to students. Ashoor (2016) stated that often information is taught as absolute facts. Students are taught in the way that everything they hear or read in school can't be criticized. This ultimately led them to be more submissive and easily recruited by terrorists. Ashoor (2016) stated that rebuilding the educational system is the only way to counter terrorism. Mooney & Young (2005) talked about how some individuals who joined terrorist groups felt alienated in the world even if they have lived or are well knowledgeable about the society they perceive as the enemy. This might be because these individuals were not prepared to accept others' differences. This is exactly the case in the Iraqi educational system where students are alienated from the outside world that they are even not taught about people who are different from them in their own country.

Almost all terrorists have or had at least basic education. They studied in Iraqi schools. Some of them even have or had higher degrees. The infamous example is ISIS leader Abu Bakir Albaghdadi who has a Master's degree in Sharia Law from the University of Baghdad (McCants, 2015). The blame here is not on teaching religion in Iraqi schools and higher education

institution, the blame falls on the type of religious teaching these institutions offer. The Ministries of Education and Higher Education must monitor all subjects where religion is taught. Both ministries must monitor the curriculum used and distributed to students to fight the spread of fundamentalism and extremism in the country.

Though some scholars have shown that there might be a relationship between terrorism and education, Peters (2005) stated that no educative response to the issue of terrorism has been made anywhere in the world. However, the Kurdistan regional government (KRG) took some measure to fight the spread of terrorism. The KRG closed 36 religious school and transferred 5000 students to public schools. The KRG has also started implementing some changes in the educational system. Mariwan Naqshbandi, the ministry of Endowment public relations officer in the KRG, stated that most of the people who joined ISIS studied in religious schools. He also stated that religious schools played a role in the spread of extremism in Iraqi Kurdistan (Malazada, 2016). This clearly shows that education is responsible for some young people to join terrorist group.

### **2.3 The Iraqi Educational System and its characteristics**

It is important to look at the case of Iraq and the relationship between education and terrorism. Unfortunately, the scholarship about education in Iraq is not much. Therefore, I must rely on journalism, anecdotal evidence and my own experience to relate to what the issues are in Iraq. These as presented here are confirmed in the results of the survey. Consequently, it is very important to know the Iraqi educational system because it helps understand how it contributes in the spread of terrorism. It can also inform people about an educational system that is rarely researched.

The educational system in Iraq is completely free. Students don't need to pay any fees to go to school. Education is also compulsory for all Iraqi children until sixth primary class (Lucas, 1982; Alborz et al., 2013). In the Iraqi educational system, school is divided into kindergarten, six years of compulsory primary education, three years of intermediate education and three years of preparatory education which are all controlled by the Ministry of Education (Alborz et al., 2013). Students start school from first class at the age of six (*Al-Ta'alim fi Al-Iraq bain Al-Madhi wa Al-Hadhir*, n.d). Before first grade, students can go to kindergarten. Some kindergartens are private and some are Public. In kindergarten, students usually don't study specific curriculum. They usually study Arabic with a foreign language either English or French. They also study some basics of religion. When the child turns six, he\she goes to primary school. Most primary schools are public schools. This means that students have to study the same curriculum in all over the country except in Kurdistan which is the autonomous region in the northern part of the country (Iraq-Education Overview, 2004; Iraq-Education).

All students from first class till fourth class of primary school study Arabic, Islamic Education, English, science and math. When students reach fifth class, they continue studying the same subjects and add Arabic grammar, history, geography and National Education (Iraq-Elementary Education, 2004). At the end of the sixth class of primary school, students take standardized test. Then, students who pass the test go to first class of intermediate school. In this class, students study the same subjects but instead of Arabic reading and writing, they study intensive Arabic grammar.

When students reach third class of intermediate school, students take another standardized test which can be so hard and make many students anxious, worried and disappointed. Therefore, many students quit school without finishing this class. Then, students



either go to secondary school which is divided into scientific and literary branches or go to vocational institutions. At the end of the sixth preparatory school year, students take their final standardized test. This is also so hard as it determines which college students can go to. Many students think that they cannot pass the exam with a good grade that can help them go to the college they want. Therefore, this puts a lot of pressure on students that some committed. For instance, one student committed suicide because she didn't answer well in her Arabic exam (*Intihar Taliba bisabab Imtihan "Al-lugha Al-Arabiah*, 2016). Four years ago, I personally knew someone from my hometown who committed suicide because he did not get the grades he wanted. He was afraid of being punished by his father for not fulfilling his father's desires of getting into a college of medicine. These two sad stories and many more would not happen if the type of assessment used in the Iraqi Educational system was different. Since the Iraqi educational system depends heavily on rote memorization, students who get a GPA less than 97% will not be admitted to the colleges of medicine. This leaves many students disappointed as they cannot achieve their dreams to major in what they want. This kind of system kills innovation and lead many students also to quit school if they keep taking the test without passing.

This problem is caused using rote memorization as the only type of instruction. In all grades, students are supposed to remember what is found in the curriculum books. Even if these pieces of information are not valid, students still have to memorize them. In fact, students are not given any credit for thinking. In standardized tests, students are also supposed to memorize everything in the book. Students who are not good at rote memorization get bad grades. Iraqi families have asked that innovative teaching methods must be used by teachers to make the Iraqi educational system child-friendly (Alborz, Slee & Miles, 2013).

There is a parallel exam for students who took the exams for three consecutive years without passing. This is called “External exam” which is similar to getting a GED. In addition to that, students can choose to study in evening public schools or vocational education schools, but in reality, parents choose the school and the profession for their children. In evening public schools, students can study the same curriculum taught in public schools. The only difference is that classes are held in the evening unlike public schools where students study in the morning or afternoon. When getting a certificate, morning or evening studies would be written on the certificate. In vocational institutes, students study about some professions like trade and agriculture. This is regarded as less prestigious if compared to the scientific and literary branches of preparatory school.

Students who graduate from public schools go to morning studies in Iraqi colleges and universities. The Ministry of Higher Education electronically does the admission according to the student’s GPA. This means that students sometimes are admitted in a major they are not willing to study at all. Graduates from vocational institutions study at technical institutions. Technical institutions and universities are run by the Ministry of Higher education (Alborz e. al., 2013). In technical institution, students study professions like agriculture, mechanics, and nursing.

Beside Public education, there are sub-educational systems run by religious institutions or the Ministry of Endowment. The government also funds these schools. In addition to these, there are schools where the medium of instruction is one of the ethnic languages in the country like Kurdish, Turkmen and Syriac. In these sub-systems, students who do not belong to the ethnic or religious group that the school belongs to are not allowed to study there. This is very problematic as, in one way or another, these schools segregate students and create communication gaps.

The Iraqi educational system is strictly controlled by the government from curricula to standardized tests and even to the employment of teachers (Wenger, 2016). All school curricula are designed by committees employed by the Ministry of Education (Roy, 1993). This means that the government is directing and governing the educational policy in the country (Kjeilen, n.d). Therefore, the Iraqi educational system is marked with changes in the curriculum as a result of changes in regimes. The new regimes tend to impose their ideology on education. This was very clear when the Baathist party took over Iraq in 1968 (Al-Daami & Stanley, 1998). Teachers and students were not free to state their opinions because if teachers or students have opposing views, this could get them in trouble. They could be jailed or even executed. Moreover, everybody who was involved in education had to abide by that sole ideology. Students had to study Baathist ideology in schools and even had to memorize Saddam's speeches. Teachers and students were also obliged to join the Baath party and participate in its weekly meetings (Mohammed-Marzouk, 2012).

After 2003, the Baathist ideology was abolished from education and joining Baath party became illegal. The new Iraqi regime has tried to get rid of the Baathist influences on Education. Therefore, all mentions of Saddam Hussein and Baathist ideology were banned from the curriculum. Some interpretations from the Shi'a perspective were also added to the curriculum. Sadly, the ideology and practices that guide the curriculum and the Iraqi educational system have not changed. The same laws are still in place. As it was before 2003 any other ideology, different from the ideology of the regime, is severely attacked and marginalized. This leaves no room for personal freedom. As a result, students learn that same way of thinking. This means that students ultimately think they are right and others are wrong. This policy is backed up by what students read during their schooling. When students finish high school, they do not read any books or

novels but only chosen passages that support the ideology of the state. Teachers, who are employed by the government, can be part of this problem. Some teachers are ideological supporters of the regime and that is why they are fiercely trying to implement the ideology of that regime. Some teachers fear losing their jobs, so they do not try to make any changes in education. This process of indoctrination is part of the education in Iraq, but it was clearer with the Baathist regime (Roy, 1993).

In this perspective, Iraq can follow the experiences of other countries. For instance, Estonia has developed a new curriculum to step away from the Soviet impact on education. The new curriculum in Estonia gives more importance to students and their individuality. It also gives more importance to the instructional methods that develop students' social competence which refers to people's ability to interact with other people (Uibu & Kikas, 2014; Ten Dam, & Volman, 2007). The Iraqi educational system and the educational policy must be changed so that it helps into the transition toward democracy.

Iraqi education is very authoritarian and teacher-centered. Teachers are responsible for everything. They are the only who give an opinion. Students opinions are not allowed even when the students say something beneficial for the class. Therefore, it is important to change the educational system to be student-centered. In student-centered education, the student take part in the learning process and set the goals of their learning (Dennison, 2010). This makes students more engaged in the class as the class is based on activities like problem solving, planning, complex decision making, debates, group discussions (Dennison, 2010; Davis, 2010). Such activities will keep students motivated and their relationship with their teachers will improve. In their study, Sultan & Hussain, (2012) found that there is a relationship between humanistic approach of teachers and students motivation in the class. Students think that authoritarian

teachers negatively impacted their motivation. Freire (1998) said that teachers who adopt authoritarian approach kill students' curiosity for learning. But in fact, they end up killing their curiosity as well. What he meant here is that authoritarian approach negatively affects both learners and teachers.

## **2.4 Religious Education**

Religious education can be either denominational or nondenominational (Kodelja, 2012). The difference between them is that denominational religious education aims at making students strongly believe in a specific religion. On the other hand, non-denominational aims to objectively teach about different religions without preferring one or imposing one religion on students (Durham Jr., Ferrari, & Santoro, 2008). Non-denominational religious education can be taught in many school subjects like social studies, history and religion. Societies can benefit from teaching non-denominational religious education as it makes individual appreciate diversity and respect others' right to freedom of worship and lessen negative ideas about other religions that lead to conflicts (Durham Jr., et al., 2008). It can also make individuals better democratic citizens (Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools, 2007, cited in Kodelja, 2012). Many countries have adopted this form of non-denominational religious education like the United States, France, Slovenia and Australia (Kodelja, 2012; Durham Jr., et al., 2008). For instance, students in Slovenia have an elective class called "Religions and Ethics" that utilizes "Teaching about Religions". Students in 7th, 8th, 9th grades can study about the major religions and religious beliefs in the world. The curriculum includes both obligatory and optional topics that students can choose to study (Kodelja, 2012).

Religious education in the Iraqi educational system is denominational in nature. Education aims to strengthen students' beliefs in God (Barany, 2013). This makes religious

education central to the Iraqi educational system. Religious education is taught in public schools, private schools and religious schools. Islamic education is taught from first grade to grade 12. It is mandatory to all Muslim students (Barany, 2013). Religious education was not popular until 2003. This is because Saddam Hussein did not popularize it and even tried to limit it until the 1990s when he announced his religious campaign (Barany, 2013, 461). But after 2003, the situation has completely changed. With the rise in religious political ideology, religious education gained more popularity. Political parties tried to popularize it to gain more support from the public which was looking for a source of power to protect them (Hanish, 2007). However, these days, the Iraqi educational system is becoming increasingly religious and religious interpretations are given to scientific phenomenon like rain (Abu Zeed, 2015). This problem has a historical root. With the rise of religious political ideology in the Middle East after the Iranian revolution of 1979, many people became more religious. This means that religion is no longer a private matter but a factor that governs every aspect of life. Secular Iraqi education could resist that trend until 2003.

After the fall of the Baath regime in 2003, which is regarded as the most secular and leftist in the modern history of Iraq, religious men gained power that enabled them to direct the educational system to where they wanted. These days, there is a rise in the number of religious schools that teach a strict form of Islam. This trend even affects the public educational system. Teachers are given directions to teach scientific facts with religious interpretations, otherwise they will be punished. Another problem is that religious men are permitted to go to schools whenever they want and without appointments and give lectures of religion which do not benefit students. Abu Zeed (2015) called the Iraqi educational system “Islamized”. The dilemma with this issue is that Iraqi society is multiethnic and multi-religious and the teaching one form of

religion is problematic. Adopting one perspective to the educational system means that there is only one correct way. In addition to this, some controversial issues in history and religion are discussed from one point of view only and not objectively. Therefore, students and teachers alike are not educated to accept other's point of view. In other words, disagreement is seen as a crime that must be punished. Student and teachers whose religious and ethnic background clashes with what is found in textbooks find themselves marginalized and even criminalized.

Teaching denominational religious education creates some problems, First, non-muslim students are not required to attend this class or take the exam and therefore "minority children are made (by law) to feel not only different but virtually discriminated against" (Barany, 2013, p. 451, 462). They also don't get grades for religion class that adds to their GPA. Muslim students benefit from this class as a bonus grade because it is easier than other subjects. This is because have students studied it from first class on and generally religion is also part of their culture that they do not have to study so much to get good grade. Islamic education perpetuates another problem which is sectarianism (Barany, 2013). After 2003, waves of sectarian conflicts hit Iraq. Shi'as and Sunnis always complained about being discriminated against and education is at the heart. Recently, the Ministry of Education made some changes to Islamic education curriculum. Some educators, politicians and ordinary people raised their concerns that there are sectarian biases favoring one sect over the other. Senior ministry officials "decided to drop anything from the new [religious education] curriculum that will hurt a specific sect or religion" (Report Prompts Changes to Iraqi Curriculum, p. 3). These concerns, though were promised to be solved, shows the problem of teaching Islamic education in school. Barany (2013) suggested to change Islamic Education to teach Islam along with other religions equally, transparently and objectively. He also suggested to reform the curriculum to include other religions as well by

establishing a multi-religious committee to design the religious curriculum. This curriculum must promote positive ideas about freedom of worship. All of these improvements can make education capable of producing a student who is aware of the importance of other religions in the country.

There is already a debate about reforming religious education. According to Malazada (2016), the second conference of Dwaryan Organization suggested that the curriculum need to be balanced to make it more civilized and religious schools must be closed. These same measures are already implemented by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). KRG has transferred 5000 students to public school because the government has closed the 36 religious schools and the 6 religious institutions that hosted them. These measures were taken as part of a campaign to reform education to fight extremism. The Iraqi federal government must follow the same steps.

Beside Islamic Education in Iraqi public schools, there are religious schools that are controlled by the Ministry of Religious Endowments. Religious schools are organized under the law number 44 1967 which stated the responsibilities of the religious schools. The law stated that these schools are equal to public schools. To be admitted in a religious school, students must be older than 6 and younger than 10. Students can enroll from first class till high school. Students from public schools can enroll in religious schools after taking a special test. If they pass the test, they can enroll in the grade which is equal to the grade they were studying in. Students from these schools study the same subjects as other schools. Their study includes subjects like math, English, physics, chemistry, biology, geography, history, Islamic studies, Arabic, and Quranic studies. Students graduating from these schools can either work as elementary school teachers in religious schools or Imams in mosques. The law was amended two times in 1993 and 2006. Both amendments were small changes about the administration of the schools and exams (*COM approves amendment of religious schools system*, 2016; Al-Ta'adil Al-Awal linidham Al-



Madaris Al-Diniyah rqm 2 lisant 1993). According to Alshimari (2012), it is estimated that there are more than 200 students in the schools. This number was lower when these schools were first established. In fact, it was between only 15-20 students. Unfortunately, this means that more students are taught in a very exclusive environment. These schools often teach a curriculum based on the sect the students follow. The literature of these two sects is filled with a lot of information which is negatively viewed by each other. Due to the fact that there are a lot of problems between Sunnis and Shi'a in the Middle East, these schools are not helping to solve the problem. In fact, these schools are producing students who have a lot of prejudice toward the other. Religious schools become so popular after 2006 when the government established schools that were directly run by the Sunni and Shiite endowment departments. According to Al-Janabi (2016), religious schools are promoting sectarianism as the students and teachers are adherents of the sect the school is based on.

One of the problems that faces education in Iraq is the lack of infrastructure. As a result of war, corruption, the economic situation, and insurgency, there are 5300 destroyed schools (Al-Janabi, 2016). The government spent millions of dollars to build schools but none of them were finished. According to Al-Sabah Newspaper, in 2011, more than 137 billion dinars were spent to build 400 schools to substitute old schools. But unfortunately, no schools were built (Al-Sabah, 2015). At the same time, the government is spending millions of dollars on religious education. This money could have been used to improve public education to help in the transition toward democracy.

A news report was published by Dewan TV Channel (2014) about religious schools in Iraq which shows that these schools have become popular among young people. A student said that she chose to enroll in the religious school because these schools are better than public

schools. She said that in these religious schools, there is a computer lab and microscopes. Another news report was published by Dijlah TV (2014) which shows how the Iraqi educational system is suffering. Looking at these two news reports, one can see the huge difference. In the video published by Dewan TV Channel (2014), the number of students in religious schools is enough to fit in a normal class and the religious school is new. Every student is sitting on one chair comfortably. These schools even have computer labs, microscopes and are well decorated. However, the video published by Dijlah TV (2014) shows that the public school is very old and crowded. Students are packed into the classroom and every 4-5 students are sitting on one desk. This miserable environment is not motivating students to study. From the video, one can see that the walls and floors are very dirty. These two videos show how the importance given to religious education and the amount of neglect that public education suffers from.

## **2.5 Problems Facing Education in Iraq**

The Iraqi educational system is facing many problems. These problems are the result of years of war, economic sanctions, sectarianism, and insurgency (Samarai, 2007). Sadly, these problems have severely affected the Iraqi educational system and the quality of education it gives to students. Below are the main problems facing education in Iraq:

### **2.5.1 Lack of schools and supplies**

As it was stated before, years of war, economic sanctions, sectarianism, and insurgency have greatly affected the Iraqi educational system. There are approximately 15,000 schools around Iraq. It is estimated that 70% of schools suffer the effects of war (ReliefWeb/UCHO 2008 cited in Alborz *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, Iraqi educational system needs more than 4500 schools

(Alborz *et. al*, 2013). This makes lack of schools a persistent problem that negatively affects education in Iraq. According to Bassem (2016), there is a great lack of schools in Iraq and every school building is shared by two to four schools. Every class hosts 60 students in it. Alborz *et al.*, (2013) argued that sharing school buildings by more than two schools has negatively affected the learning environment and in turn it makes impossible to achieve high quality education that Iraq aspires to restore. In 2015, Iraqi Ministry of Education announced that they need 9000 new schools to host the growing number of students. This means that the need for schools has doubled since 2008. In fact, millions of dollars have been dedicated to build new schools, but only 6% was really spent on schools. The rest of the money was stolen as a result of corruption (Bassem, 2016).

As it is already mentioned, lack of schools has led schools to share school buildings and crowded classrooms. There are many negative effects of crowding in schools. One teacher said that in big classrooms, it is very hard to transmit information to all students equally. In fact, one student has dropped out of school because of this. Ten-year-old Saad Hasan said that he was in a class of 60 students and he could not understand anything and the teacher could not pay him any attention (Bassem, 2016). In crowded classes, viruses will easily spread among students which poses another problem to the school system. The lack of schools is coupled with lack of infrastructure. Most schools lack electricity and restrooms. In very harsh weather in the summer and winter, this makes schools not a good place to go to. In addition to that, schools lack desks and chairs. Students have to sit on the ground. One family told their story to website called Ultra Sout. The father said that every day, their son comes back from school with dust all over his clothes and bag as he has to sit on a dirty floor. This student goes to a school in the Karkh side of Baghdad (Sadoon, 2015). This problem shows how chronic the lack of schools and school

supplies is in Iraq. If this is the situation in the capital, then it must be worse in other provinces. Unfortunately, in many southern provinces, students go to schools built from clay bricks which are about to fall down. It is estimated that there are around 1000 clay schools in the whole country (Ahmed, 2015). These schools are very fragile especially in winter and they do not offer a good environment for learning. These schools were often donated by families. It is very important for the country to solve this problem because the long-term effect of lack of schools on education is very negative. Students will not learn anything while sitting in a classroom with 60 students. Many students will end up dropping out of school. These young people will have no chance in life other than joining terrorist groups to find what they couldn't find in education which is financial independence.

Another big problem facing education in Iraq is lack of books. One feature of Iraqi education is the continuous change of curriculum. Every year, the Ministry of Education changes the curriculum (Al-Adami, 2016). Sometimes, these changes are minor ones, but sometimes the entire book is changed. But what the ministry fails to do is to print enough new books for the number of students in schools. Students who can afford buying books usually buy them from the black market, but the majority have to wait or share books with other students (Al-Adami, 2016). It is clear that the Ministry of Education doesn't plan well before deciding to change the curriculum. All of these problems are affecting the Iraqi educational system very negatively.

### **2.5.2 Use of rote memorization**

Brook (2013) defines education as “an activity that humans engage in and as such must necessarily express something about what and how it is to be human” (p. 39). This means that education is part of human life. It can be any kind of activity that humans learn new information from. Freire (1998) defined education as “human act of intervening in the world” (p. 6). This

means that the main purpose of education is to change the negativities in the world. In his words, education can be positive when it seeks radical changes in society and negative when it tries to create inequality between people based on their socio-economic and cultural status. In the Encyclopædia Britannica education is defined as “the transmission of the values and accumulated knowledge of a society” (Education 2017). This transmission of knowledge can be done differently. For instance, the Socratic way is based on reasoning and questioning of knowledge and facts. It has come to be known as critical thinking. This is opposed to indoctrination and rote memorization. Therefore, it can be said that the aim of education is to encourage students to question what they are told. These characteristics do not apply to the Iraqi educational system. Teachers are not interested or encouraged to teach students to think about what they learn in school.

The use of rote memorization in teaching is a persistent problem in Iraq (Mohammed-Marzouk, 2012). This often leads to indoctrinating students to adopt one ideology. Students are supposed to memorize what they find in their textbooks. This kind of blind memorization kills the critical thinking ability of students (Paul, 1990). In his article, Alrubaie (2015) raises many questions about the issue of rote memorization in education and its relation to public life. He stated that since its establishment, education in Iraq has been solely based on the curriculum and the teacher. Students are supposed to passively receive information without questioning its validity. He also stated that rote memorization leads students to be submissive and later to be submissive citizens who will not question what they are told or the authority of the regime. In his brief history about education in Iraq, Mohammed-Marzouk (2012) examined the Iraqi educational system. He also noted that it depends heavily on rote memorization. Teachers use it because they think it is better than other ways of teaching. He stated that Iraqi students have to

memorize every word in the book (Mohammed-Marzouk, 2012). This has led students to lack the ability of thinking critically as well as transferring what they learn to their real life. Therefore, it is time that teachers understand that memorizing everything in the curriculum is not the objective of education, but rather giving students the chance to construct and produce knowledge themselves (Freire, 1998).

Teaching through rote memorization often leads students to be submissive and later to be submissive citizens because they it leads them to accept everything without thinking of the validity (Alrubaie, 2015). Students are always expected to accept what is in the book and what teachers tell them. This ultimately make them always looking for an authority to do things. Many people join militant groups, whether terrorist groups or anti-terrorism groups, without thinking of the consequences of their decisions or what they are going to achieve by becoming militants. Many people often join these groups just because religious men call them to fight in the “holy war”. This teaching method ignores students and rather gives more importance to the teacher and the curriculum. In this case, the teacher’s purpose is to convince the student to believe what they read in the curriculum even if there is evidence that refutes what is in the curriculum. Students will always look for a authority that tells them what to do. Later in their lives, these students will accept what war lords tell them because they never have the autonomy to make decisions independently.

One of the problems of using rote memorization is the exam. Students are supposed to memorize the material and then write it down on the exam sheet. But once the exam is over, students will likely forget everything. Another problem of using rote memorization is that it usually leads to corporal punishments. Students who fail to recite the material are often physically punished. Teachers think that students are lazy and did not read the text and memorize

it. Teachers think that punishment can solve this problem. It is fair to say that such authoritarian teaching style strips students from their rights and ignore their feelings and needs (Mncube and Netshitangani, 2014).

The problem of rote memorization is very deep rooted in the Iraqi educational system to the extent that it is described as the most dangerous problem that faces education in Iraq (Alrubaie, 2015). The reason rote memorization is negatively affecting education is because it produces students who are unable to use their rational thinking and beliefs (Paul, 1990). Alrubaie (2015) suggests using teachers' experiences to improve the educational system in Iraq to stop using rote memorization as a method of teaching (Alrubaie, 2015). Teachers who worked for years know how to deliver the material to students in the best way. They have some knowledge about how to keep students engaged in the class that they developed from working in the field of education. They also know what is beneficial to students and what is not. Therefore, it is important to include experienced teachers when designing the curriculum. Unfortunately, even with their experiences, experienced teachers are not allowed to take part in designing the curriculum or have the freedom to be innovative in teaching classes. They are also not allowed to change the way they teach because they have to follow rules already set by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education controls and monitors the educational system through supervisors who visit schools twice a year or more than three times. They attend classes and see the class progress in the curriculum. Therefore, teachers can not deviate from the policy set forth.

### **2.5.3 Use of physical punishment and teaching violence**

Physical or corporal punishment is widely practiced in many educational systems around the world (Abrifor, 2008). In Iraqi schools, physical punishment is still very prevalent. Punishment can take different forms and the most common form is violent punishment that is

perpetrated against students by their teachers (Mncube and Netshitangani, 2014). Students as young as seven are hit by a stick on their hands or slapped on the cheek if they are not prepared for the class or if they make noise in the class. Sometimes, the whole class is punished because of one student. Studies show that violence and punishment does not do any good for schools and on the opposite, it negatively affects students' psychological wellbeing (Abrifor, 2008; Ekanem & Edet, 2013; Ba-Saddik & Hattab, 2013; Mncube and Netshitangani, 2014). In fact, students who are punished are more likely to revert to what they did before. In other words, students are more likely to misbehave when there are more rules against them. Rewards get better results than punishment in schools. (2013). There are many videos that went viral on social media where teachers punish students. One video shows a headteacher in a school in the city of Amara in Southern Iraq hitting young students. It is not clear what the reason these students were punished. According to the news anchor who reported about that video, neither the Ministry of Education nor any other governmental agency investigated the issue (*Barnamj Ahl Al-Madinah*, 2015). The same channel reported another case of violence against a student but this time in Basra. In this report, they interviewed a student who is talking about how the headteacher was hitting him. The student was badly hit and his family thought he was dead. The Ministry of Education, the education directorate and the school said that the school principal did not hit him, but he had a heart attack. The student's father said that his son does not have a heart problem (*Barnamj Ahl Al-Madinah*, 2015). These stories and many more show how ignorant the authorities are concerning the use of violence in schools by teachers and principals.

Punishment in Iraqi schools is so prevalent that almost every student has experienced it. Personally, I experienced punishment from first class till sixth class of elementary school. In elementary school, teachers would punish us when one student made noise. In middle school, I



was not punished just because I was in a mixed school and it was unacceptable for male teachers to hit female students in front of male students. But I still remember how teachers punished my male classmates. One time, there was a student who was yawning. The teacher started hitting him everywhere just for that. Another time, a student was hit for wearing casual pants. Using violence was very negative in the class because students hated teachers so much. They even did the opposite of what teachers asked them to do as a reaction to teachers' bad treatment and disrespect. Teachers wanted to show their authority by physically punishing students. As Mohammed-Marzouk, (2012) said "Teachers fluctuated between the roles of being "oppressed" by the regime and being "oppressors" of their students (p. 262-3). Corporal punishment is still prevalent in many parts of the world. Ba-Saddik & Hattab (2013) conducted a study to find out the prevalence of punishment in elementary schools in Adan province in Yemen. They surveyed 1066 students from 8 schools. They found out that 55.7% of students experienced punishment at least once. They also found that girls experienced less punishment with 26.6% in comparison with 73.2% for boys. The study found that teachers usually perpetrated violence against school children. The study urged the authorities to measures that make schools safe havens for students.

Therefore, it would be better if the use of violence and punishment is abandoned because it creates a gap of communication between students and the school. Additionally, it would be better if schools try to find alternatives to violence and punishment. School principals can encourage positive behavior and reward it (*Rewards get better results than punishment in schools*, 2013). Abrifor (2008) suggested that teachers need to be trained to use alternative ways of non-violent punishment like distractions and rewarding appropriate behavior. Teachers must know what impacts physical punishment has on students in the short and long term. Students must also be respected and given freedom and autonomy to express themselves and not to be

physically and psychologically punished (Freire, 1998). Teachers often forget that disciplinary behavior comes willingly from the inside of the student not by force (Feinstein & Mwahombela 2010).

Studies have proved that physical or corporal punishment is ineffective. For instance, Mncube and Netshitangani (2014) conducted a study about violence in schools in six South African provinces. This study tried to answer three questions. The first is if schools are responsible that students see violence as the only solution to problems they face. The second question is about any initiative or measure to make the school violence-free environment. The third question is concerned with the effectiveness of these measures and how violent teachers affect implementing these measures. Mncube and Netshitangani (2014) found that the most common form of punishment is verbal abuse. Teachers call students with bad names and talk badly about their parents which made students feel bad. Unfortunately, the school does not have a policy to stop abuse and bullying perpetrated against students. The study confirmed other studies that corporal punishment is still very common in schools although it is illegal by the South African law. The study found that schools have cooperated with the police to search for any weapons that students might bring to schools. Mncube and Netshitangani (2014) that two principals talked about forming security committees that include teachers, parents and students. They also found that violence perpetrated by teachers have a relation to students' violence. This study gives the suggestions that schools have to be transformed into safe havens where students come to learn not to be beaten or abused. The same applies to Iraqi schools that students' have to be respected and they and their parents have to be included in the decision making in the school when it comes to discipline.

Research has shown that using punishment can't be the solution but it can create more problems. Rob Horner and George Sugai from the University of Oregon have developed what is so called "School-Wide Positive Behavior and Support, or SWPBS" (*Rewards get better results than punishment in schools*, 2013). With SWPBS, school leaders create a set of clear rules that students have to follow. Students are taught these rules, and assessed to see if they met or did not meet the school expectations. When students follow these rules, and meet the expectations, they are rewarded. The reward can vary and it can be in the form of tickets they can use to buy from the school bookstore. Iraqi schools can use a similar program or find alternative means to reinforce positive behavior. Medley, Little, & Akin-little (2008) conducted a study to find out if schools which implemented SWPBS and non-SWPBS schools produce different support plans for behavior problems. The result supported the hypothesis that schools using SWPBS were technically better at producing and integrating support plans for problem behaviors.

Fallon, McCarthy, & Sanetti (2014) conducted a study to find out the consistency and the challenges of implementing SWPBS in the classroom in 10 schools in Connecticut. Emails were sent to 132 schools that use SWPBS at the time of the study. Ten principals gave their consents to participate in the study. The school principals forwarded the surveys to the teachers. Only one school principals sent the survey to the SWPBS. The result of the study finds that it is challenging for teachers to effectively teach when negative behaviors occur in the class. At the same time, teachers have difficulty in defining the positive behavior they want to achieve. It is also not challenging to teach and reinforce positive behavior. This finding shows that teachers need to be trained and supported while implementing SWPBS.

In Iraq, violence is not only used to punish students, but it is also taught to students. History books are filled with passages that glorify violence and war over peace. This leads a

whole generation to be indoctrinated to easily adopt the culture of violence. Deasy. (2011) interviewed Fareed Lafta, a young Iraqi skydiver who wanted to inspire young Iraqis by jumping over Baghdad. He said that “The educational vacuum in the country has left an opening..... for extremists” (Deasy, 2011). Therefore, it is important that this “opening” is closed. This opening is represented by history books. Teaching these violent events objectively can benefit students and the society as a whole.

#### **2.5.4 Lack of training for teachers in using modern educational methods**

Because of the nature of the Iraqi educational system, teachers usually lack training. When teachers graduate from colleges of education or institutions, they don't get any training in modern methods of education. In fact, they study about these methods using rote memorization. They are supposed to memorize what is in the book and not to have a discussion about it or learn how to use it. This has made most teachers take the role of police to keep the order in schools (Freire, 1998). My personal story with studying in college of education was bad. I remember when I did my student teaching, I was thrown into the classroom without knowing what I was supposed to do. I did not get any training in how to make exams and how to put grade values to each question. This is something all new teachers have experienced. This makes it impossible to improve the educational system in the country. It also makes it difficult for education to help in the transition from totalitarianism toward democracy because these new teachers will teach students the same way they were taught. The new generation will also be authoritarian and totalitarian in their thinking.

An important aspect of teacher training must be how to manage classes. Iraqi teachers must be trained to be authoritative rather than authoritarian. Authoritative teachers tend to give students autonomy and freedom in the classroom. They also tend to include students in the

decision making. Students who are taught by authoritative teachers have high self-esteem and better relationship with their teachers (Uibu, & Kikas, 2014, p. 6). On the other hand, authoritarian teachers tend to be more controlling, restrict students' autonomy and resort to physical punishment which many Iraqi teachers are. As a result, their students tend to have problems in their behaviour, relationship and study (Uibu, & Kikas, 2014, p. 6-7). It is important that Iraqi teachers do not become permissive or uncontrolled as they can turn their classes into chaos and ultimately negatively affect students' academic development (Uibu, & Kikas, 2014, p. 6-7).

Another problem is that most of the teachers do not only lack training in how to teach and use modern teaching techniques, but also the willingness to become teachers. When students finish high school, they apply for colleges and their GPA determines the college they go to. Many students will be obliged to study education even though it is the last thing they wanted to study. Therefore, it is very important that the admission system in Iraqi universities is changed so that only enthusiastic students are accepted to be future teachers. In addition, it is important to change the way subjects like education, methodology and psychology are taught. Students must study in a discussion-based method rather than indoctrination. In this way, they will develop rich knowledge about these subjects.

In Iraq, teachers work in schools according to their academic background. Graduates from institutes and basic education colleges work as elementary school teachers. They teach students from 1st grade to 6th grade. Graduates from colleges of education work as secondary and high school teachers (*Istratijiati'adad Al-Mua'alim wa Tatatweer Al-Mihani*, 2013). In these colleges and institutions, students learn about the academic subjects as well as educational and psychological subjects. According to *Istratijiati'adad Al-Mua'alim* (2013), the students

who are admitted in these colleges are not interested in these colleges and becoming teachers. These students are usually taught using the indoctrination method and lack adequate training in teaching. It is supposed that teachers have to get academic training for 10 days every year in April and May. This training is done by directorates affiliated with the Ministry of Education and international organizations like UNICEF, UNESCO and the British Cultural Council.

### **2.5 .5 Illiteracy**

For decades, Iraq had one of the best educational systems in the Middle east (Takayama, 2009). During the 1970s and 1980s, Iraq announced a campaign to eradicate illiteracy. The campaign resulted in thousands becoming literate, thanks to commitment of the authorities and people's willingness to cooperate to achieve success for the campaign (Lucas, 1982, p. 25). But years of war, economic sanctions, sectarianism and insurgency have negatively impacted the educational system in Iraq. Illiteracy is one of the main problems that threatens education in Iraq. In the 1970s, Iraq had the lowest percent of illiteracy in the region. This was the result of that national campaign to educate every citizen. But after that, with sanctions in the 1990s, many students dropped out of schools to work to support their families. Teachers also suffered a lot. Their salary had dropped to \$3 a month when previously it was \$300 (Mohammed-Marzouk, 2012).

After the American invasion in 2003 and the change in government, the rate of illiteracy has increased especially because the government is not taking any measures to fight it. According to Deasy (2011), one in five fifteen-years old Iraqis is illiterate. This was actually caused by mass destruction of school facilities, increase in child labor, antagonizing education and girls' early marriage. Wars and terrorist attacks caused many students not to go to schools. Oxfam International indicated that regular closing of schools has caused learning obstruction.

Takayama, (2009) stated that students are sometimes afraid of going to schools. Iraqi refugee children in Iraq's neighbouring countries also suffer from high rates of illiteracy. Many children do not go to school; because either they have to work to financially support their families or their families cannot afford paying school fees and other school expenses (Williams, Kasseb, Shakaram, & Bird, 2007).

I personally experienced the impact of fighting on education. During 2014, many terrorist attacks took place in my hometown including firing rockets, kidnapping, and assassinations. The morning after attacks as many as 75% of the students did not come to school. One day, there were rockets firing. A rocket fell just a few hundred meters away from the school and the next day many students did not come back. Many students even dropped out and returned to school after two years. With economic factors and violence many students and parents decide that it is better to drop out of school (Williams *et al.*, 2007). This problem cannot be solved unless the security situation is improved. If this is achieved, literacy rates can potentially increase. Iraqi government must tighten the laws that prevent parents from letting their children drop out of schools. The government must make schools secure places and increase security measures in areas that have schools. All of these measures will encourage parents to send their children back to school. Failing to do that will potentially increase violence for the short term because illiteracy can be the reason why some people turn to crime. Statistics show that people with reading difficulty are more likely to be involved in criminal cases (*Could illiteracy and the lack of effective reading strategies be the hidden cause of crime?*, 2013).

There is a rise in illiteracy in Iraq. According to the spokesman for the Ministry of Planning said that the latest statistics show that 18% of Iraqis are illiterate. Most illiterate are women (Al-Takhtit: Nisbat Al-Umiah fi Al-Iraq balghat 18% akthauha min Al-Inath, 2015). A

lack of education means lack of opportunities. Because of the nature of the economic system, most people look for jobs in the public sector. The private sector is very weak and doesn't offer many jobs. Therefore, illiterate people have no chance to work in the public sector. These people will often resort to violence and join violent groups. As a result, the circle of violence is never ending. What this research suggests is that what students learn in school can make them easily exposed to violence and cause them to join terrorist groups. At the same time, illiteracy can also lead young people to join terrorist groups as they lack opportunities in their lives. If Iraq wants to get rid of terrorism, vital changes must take place. The curriculum must be modified and create stronger laws prohibiting families from encouraging their children to drop out of school.

Looking at scholarship about the relationship between education and terrorism and the Iraqi educational system and its problems, it is important that education is used to promote peace, awareness of others, and acceptance of diversity. This cannot be achieved without introducing a new curriculum which can be based on either citizenship education or teaching about religions. This curriculum must promote peace and nonviolent techniques as a solution to what students face in their lives. It must also teach students to reason and think critically of what they students and what they decide in their life. Additionally, it is vital to the success of any initiative to teach students about the different cultures and religions in the country and the world. This is important because many people are taught only their culture, religion and history which makes them ignorant about other ethnic and religious groups in their country. This lack of knowledge make many people willing strip other who are different from them from their rights to live as equal citizens.



### **Chapter 3: Method**

This chapter is about the method of the study. It gives a description of the framework of the study and the reasons behind choosing this method. It also presents the questions of the study and the procedure used to handle the study to the participants. The last section is about the participants which covers their age, place of origin in Iraq and their academic background.

#### **3.1 Framework**

The impact of terrorism is very huge in the modern world. Almost all countries are affected by terrorism and Iraq is not an exception. Successive Iraqi government always tried to counter terrorism by military force. No governmental agency or non-governmental agency have tried to find the causes that drive many people to join terrorist groups. This study tries to find out whether Education in Iraq is responsible for the spread of terrorism in the country. To determine this relationship, a need assessment is required which the survey serves. Since it is difficult to prove the relationship between education and terrorism, this survey aims to find out if Iraqi citizens, who have been affected by terrorism every single day of their lives, think that education is responsible for the spread of terrorism in their country. The result of the survey will help find solutions for the epidemic of terrorism in Iraq and if it relates to education.

#### **3.2 Research questions**

Based on the the assumption that improving education can decrease terrorism, the main research question is “Can education be used as counter terrorism in Iraq and How?”. The survey consists of 6 questions. Respondents were asked about their age because it is important to make

sure that respondents are older than 18 years old and to see the age variation between younger and older generations. Respondents were also asked about the province of origin to find out if all the provinces are represented or not. In addition to that, respondents were asked about level of education to find out which levels of education are represented. These questions are important to get a holistic view of how Iraqi think of education in their country. If respondents were from the same age group or the same province or the same academic background, the results will be very subjective. It also asks the respondents if they think that there is a relationship between education and terrorism in Iraq and if changing the educational system can help counter terrorism and, if yes, how, and if no, why. The survey questions include the main issues Iraq needs to target in order to use education as counter terrorism. These issues include:

- The use of critical thinking, use of different curriculum designs
- Freedom to choose from a variety of books, and introducing students to different points of views, different cultures, and religions.
- The extermination of the use of violence.
- Thinking of the goals of education rather than the curriculum itself.
- Unifying the educational systems to be inclusive, secular, neutral.
- promote pluralism in the country, and stop promoting the culture of violence in the curriculum are the eight theses of this study.

### **3.3 Procedure**

Before posting the survey on Facebook, an abstract about this research and the research questions were reviewed by Valparaiso University Institutional Review Board (IRB). When the research was approved, the survey was posted on Facebook groups. These groups are mainly educational groups that have members who are Iraqi university students studying in Iraq and

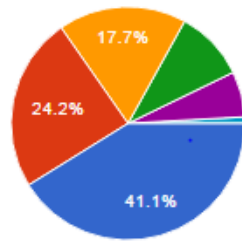
abroad. Because it was easier and faster to reach respondents from all rays of the society, these Facebook groups were chosen.

### **3.4 Participants**

The survey was answered by respondents from all age groups and all over the country except Kurdistan region. Kurdistan region was not included because students study in a different curriculum and language. But this does not mean that Kurdish students are less prone to join terrorist groups motivated either by religion or nationalism. Therefore, the survey targets students who studied in Arabic in the 15 provinces controlled by the Iraqi central government. This makes the result of the survey more reliable. In other words, if people from all over the country answered the survey, this gives more representation to all citizens. The targeted groups are newly graduate high schooler, college students, school teachers, university students, professors and anybody who studied in Iraqi schools.

The total number of respondents was 666. Some respondents answered more than one time. Therefore, the repeated answers were deleted in order to make the results more valid. These respondents come from different provinces and age groups. They also have different academic backgrounds. 41.1% of the respondents are between 18 and 24. This means that they are mostly college students who are still studying their bachelor's degree. Then, it is followed by respondents between 25-30 years. This group was 24.2%. The third group was between 30-35 years old which was 17.7%. This group is followed by respondents between 35-40 years old which was 9.8%. Respondents between 40-50 years old were only 6.3%. The least was over 60 years old which was 0.9%. This percentages are shown in table 1:

How old are you? كم عمرك اي؟



18-24	274	41.1%
25-30	161	24.2%
30-35	118	17.7%
35-40	65	9.8%
40-50	42	6.3%
Over 60	6	0.9%

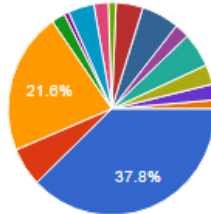
Table: 1

The majority of the respondents are young people who are very eager to change the situation in the country. This difference in age group might be the result of three reasons. The first one is because the survey was given through social media and young people are far more dominant in using social media. The second reason is that young people are more optimistic toward positive change and eager to achieve it. Therefore, they found the project to be an opportunity to change the situation in the country by improving education because many people requested to be informed later about the result of the survey. The third reason is 50% of Iraqis are under 19 in a country of 33.8 million (UNDP, 2014, cited from Human Development Report 2014). This means that half of the population is young.

For this survey, respondents from 15 of 18 provinces were surveyed. The three provinces not included are Erbil, Duhok and Sulaymaniyah which constitute the Kurdistan region and have a different system where Kurdish is the main means of instruction. These provinces were excluded because they do not study the same subjects that their fellow citizens study in other parts of the country. However, most of the respondents were from Baghdad with 37.8%, followed by Al-Anbar with 21.6% and then 5.9% for both Basra and An-Najaf. Other provinces

ranged from 5.3% to 0.8%. The percentages for each province are shown in the following table 2:

In which province do you live? من أي محافظة؟



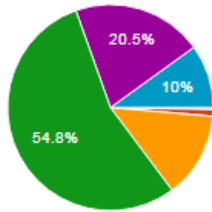
Baghdad بغداد	252	37.8%
Basra بصره	39	5.9%
Al-Anbar الانبار	144	21.6%
Diyala ديالى	14	2.1%
Al-Muthana المتني	5	0.8%
Al-Qadisyyah القادسيه	27	4.1%
Kirkuk كركوك	15	2.3%
Maysan ميسان	8	1.2%
Ninwa نينوى	28	4.2%
An-Najaf النجف الاشرف	39	5.9%
Karbala كربلاء	15	2.3%
Babil بابل	35	5.3%
Salah Ad-Din صلاح الدين	20	3%
Dhi Qar ذي قار	16	2.4%
Wasit واسط	9	1.4%

Table: 2

It is clear that some provinces have more representation than others. This is just the result of the survey being randomly posted on Facebook where some populations have more access than others. One thing to be noted is that these percentages do not match the actual population of each province. For instance, Ninawa is the second most populated province after Baghdad, but only 4.2% answered the survey.

A variety of academic backgrounds are represented in this survey. The majority (54%) have or are studying for a Bachelor’s degree. This is followed by 20.5% for a Master’s degree. Others were 13.4% of respondents with a high school degree, 10% with a Ph.d, 1.1% with a middle school education and 0.3% of respondents with an elementary school education. These percentages are shown in table 3:

ماهي درجه تعليمك؟ What is your level of education?



Elementary school	أبتدائي	2	0.3%
Middle school	متوسطة	7	1.1%
Highschool	أعداديه	89	13.4%
Bachelor degree	بكلوريوس	363	54.8%
Master's degree	ماستر	136	20.5%
Phd	دكتوراه	66	10%

Table: 3

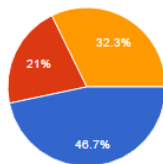
## Chapter 4: Findings and Discussions

This study presents the findings and the discussions of the study. It also presents the major issues that must be addressed to improve the educational system in Iraq. These issues were included in the survey. Respondents were asked about these issues that were also extensively discussed in terms of how the scholarship looked at them.

### 4.1 Findings

The relationship between education and terrorism is not clear and there is debate among scholars and researchers whether education is the main factor in the spread of terrorism or other factors like politics and economics (Krueger, Alan B; Maleckova, Jitka, 2003 p. 119). Some scholars think that terrorism is caused by education. Whereas some think that education can help in preventing more people from becoming terrorists (Peters, 2005, p xii). In this survey, 46.7% think that education is responsible for turning some individuals into terrorists. 32.3% think that education might be the reason for the spread of terrorism in Iraq. But only 21% think that there is no relationship between education and terrorism in Iraq. This result shows that a growing number of people think that education is the number one factor that led many people to become terrorists. Table 4 shows these percentages:

هل تعتقد ان هناك علاقة بين نظام التعليم وانتشار الارهاب بالعراق؟ Do you think there is a relationship between Education and the spread of Terrorism in Iraq?

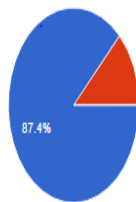


Yes نعم	311	46.7%
No لا	140	21%
Maybe ربما	215	32.3%

Table 4.

Respondents were asked if they think that improving the educational system in Iraq can help as a counter to terrorism and growing numbers of home terrorists. 87.4% of the respondents think that education can be the solution to terrorism that Iraq can benefit from and use to fight terrorism. Only 12.6% of the respondents think that improving education will not help counter terrorism in the country. Table 5 shows these results:

هل تعتقدون ان تطوير او تغير نظام التعليم يمكن ان يساعد بالتخلص من الارهاب والعنف من المجتمع العراقي؟  
Do you think improving and changing the Iraqi Educational system can exterminate terrorism and violence from the Iraqi society?



Yes نعم	582	87.4%
No لا	84	12.6%

Table 5.

These results show that the majority of respondents think that education can be the key solution for the epidemic of terrorism that has taken hundreds of thousands of lives from 2003 till this very day. The respondents were also asked how education can help counter terrorism. They suggested many ways and solutions. But the suggestions seem to be centered around specific issues.

The first one is concerned with teaching religion and history. 38 respondents seem to agree on getting rid or modifying subjects like religion and history in Iraqi schools for many reasons. One respondent said that the problem is caused by the way historical events are treated in subjects like religion, history, and National Education. He\she thought that the wording of these subjects is very problematic and it encourages violence and terrorism.<sup>1</sup> Another respondent stated that changing the Iraqi educational system will only eliminate, not exterminate, terrorism

<sup>1</sup> Some quotes are translated and paraphrased from the survey.



because there are other factors that lead to terrorism. He says, "I can send you a proof that support my opinion, I saw an interview with one of terrorist who said when I was in (Alsharia college) I was hoping to kill by (Aljihad) and go to paradise and she said this thought comes from what I learned in my college". Many respondents seem to agree on the issue of teaching religion and history as the main reason some people ultimately become terrorists. One respondent said that some books and interpretation of religious texts, in one way or another, refer to using violence against people with opposing opinions. Another respondent thought that teaching religion ultimately leads everybody, young and old, to become future terrorists. He also said that this problem can be solved by adding classes where philosophy, science and patriotism are taught without touching on the sectarian and ethnic differences among people. Another respondent thought that giving up religious classes would ultimately make the person more open-minded. One of the respondents thought that not teaching religion would make the society more civilized. This view is supported by another respondent who stated that it is better if religious education is not overly taught because it makes the whole generation extremist and terrorist.

Many of these responses were in favor of getting rid of teaching religion in schools and modifying subjects like history in a way that does not encourage violence and extremism. But one respondent thought that all religions must be taught and not only Islam. On the other hand, there were some respondents who thought that teaching a moderate type of Islam would be a solution for this problem. They thought that the reason many become terrorists is because they were taught the wrong type of Islam that makes them become terrorists. For instance, this respondent answered the question by saying "By instilling correct Islamic values on pupils in the Primary stage" can stop them from becoming terrorists. Additionally, a respondent said, "by educating people and teaching them the true principle of Islam." Another opinion was to monitor

and direct the religious education in the country. While one respondent says that changing the religious rhetoric leads to objective education that is not affected by extremism.

These answers give an idea of how Iraqi people now think of teaching religion in schools. These differing opinions lead to one of two suggestions that Iraq can adopt. The first one is to completely stop teaching Islamic education in schools because it excludes minorities. It also leads to tension between Sunnis and Shi'as as there are many differences between the two sects which are impossible to be taught together. The other suggestion is to teach Islamic education along with other religions in the country. These religions shall be taught equally and be given the same amount of time and importance.

Another solution was to improve education generally. Here, many respondents referred to improving the curriculum, educating students to be aware of other people and training teachers to teach effectively and not to resort to corporal punishment. Improving the curriculum in Iraq is very important. 19 respondents referred to the issue of old curriculum as being negative. They suggested to give more importance to teaching science and critical thinking as an alternative to rote memorization. The Iraqi educational system still depends on rote memorization and outdated teaching methodologies. One respondent thought that teaching reading and writing only, without listening to the students, ultimately leads to a blind generation. By saying "Blind generation", the respondent means a generation where the individuals are easily manipulated and drawn by extremist ideology. Another respondent stated, "Following modern scientific methods and curricula that focus on the development of the learners' identity and character and are capable of constructing "a healthy generation." Clearly, he means there is a need to teach students to be independent. In the Iraqi educational system, students are not allowed to express themselves or share their opinions. Students do not get any chances to know who they are while they are in

school because all they do in school is recite what they memorized at home. Therefore, it is important that the curriculum includes materials that help in building up students' personalities. Another respondent thought that the solution would be "teaching students how to critically think and how to use their best judgement on what's right and wrong". Teaching critical thinking can have a double benefit. First, it can make people think twice before joining terrorists organizations and groups. This respondent said that it is important to change the teaching methods in school in a way to help students think and use their minds. Second, it will increase people's awareness of other's rights as equal citizens. This is a concern raised by many respondents. This respondent said that "I think we need a curriculum about awareness that teaches students to accept other religions and sects and understand that people's religion and ideology is the result of the society". This issue was raised by 81 respondents. Many of them thought that teaching similarities between people can be a solution for the extermination of terrorism as it makes people understand that others are equal to them. This respondent thought that it is important to teach students to be aware that people have the right to state their opinions freely. He thought that raising awareness of the different religions and ethnic groups will change the way these students think of these groups before negatively judging people from these groups. It can be concluded that respondents thought that awareness about other minorities will lessen the possibility that young people join terrorist organizations where the main goal is to threaten their existence. Respondents also meant that awareness of other minorities can make people less ignorant and value other religions and ideologies equally.

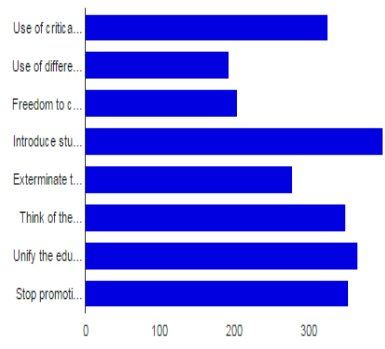
Four respondents also stressed the importance of having a positive relationship between the teacher and the student. Some respondents thought that terrorism is in fact the result of the bad treatment that many students experienced in schools and home. One respondent thought that

terrorism would be gone when “teachers are not violent with their students”. This opinion was supported by many other respondents who thought that teachers must be trained to use modern teaching methods and not to resort to violence to punish students. Therefore, it is important to train teachers who can navigate current political realities so that their students can read both “the word and the world” (Freire, 1993, cited in Beabout, 2008: 22) In fact, one respondent thought that terrorism is partly the result of using violence against students. These students would look for a chance to get revenge. Therefore, teachers must be trained and educated to respect their students. In addition to that, students need to know about other religions and ethnic groups in the country since Iraq is known for being a multi-religious and multi-ethnic country (Barany, 2013). Unfortunately, Iraqi education does not teach anything about these different groups. Students from these ethnic and religious groups are not allowed to study their languages, their religions or their history unless they are a majority in the class. For example, Iraqi students have to study Islamic education from first elementary class to sixth preparatory class. Students of other faiths are not allowed to attend these classes. They often feel discriminated against or inferior to other students (Barany, 2013). Many respondents have pointed out that there is a need to address this issue.

For respondents who thought that there was no relation between education and terrorism, a question of “why” was asked. Most of the respondents stated that the causes of terrorism are political in nature. Respondents seem to agree that inequality, injustice and political corruption are the main causes of terrorism. Some respondents also referred to causes like media, social media and propaganda. According to them, if these problems were solved, terrorism would not flourish in Iraq.

The survey also included a question about the main issues that need to be addressed in order to improve the Iraqi educational system. As part of this thesis, some points were suggested in order to better improve the Iraqi educational system. Respondents were asked to choose the main points they thought would improve education in Iraq if they were addressed. 60.1% chose introducing students to different points of views and different cultures and religions. 41.7% chose exterminating the use of violence. 52.6% preferred thinking of the goals of education rather than the curriculum itself. 55% preferred unifying the educational systems to be inclusive, secular, neutral and promote pluralism in the country. And 53% chose to stop promoting the culture of violence in the curriculum. 48.9% of respondents were in favor of the use of critical thinking. 30.6% chose freedom to choose from a variety of books. 29% chose using different curriculum designs. These results are shown in Table 6:

حسب رأيكم أي من السمات التالية؟  
 للنظام التعليمي العراقي تحتاج الاهتمام بها لجعل التعليم أقل عنفاً و تطرفاً؟



استخدام التفكير النقدي بدل الحفظ	326	48.9%
استخدام تصاميم مناهج مختلفة	193	29%
حرية اختيار من مجموعه متنوعه من الكتب	204	30.6%
تعریف الطالب على وجهات نظر مختلفه وثقافات واديان مختلفه	400	60.1%
التخلص من استخدام العنف	278	41.7%
التفكير بأهداف التعليم بدلاً من المنهج نفسه	350	52.6%
توحيد أنظمة التعليم في العراق ليكون شامل للجميع علماني ومحلي ويروج للتعددية الدينية والتفقيه في البلد	366	55%
التوقف عن نشر ثقافة العنف في المناهج الدراسية	353	53%

Table 6.

As can be seen, most respondents were in favor of introducing other's points of views and educate students about the different religions and ethnic groups in the country. This a very important issue because often times attacks were carried out against one group because of ignorance. This has made many minorities in a vulnerable status (Barany, 2013). Respondents were also in favor of unifying educational systems in Iraq. As it is already said, there are subsystems in Iraq. These were established after 2003. Given the fact that Iraqi society is multiethnic and multi-religious, these subsystems are alienating certain groups from the rest of the society and make it easy for individuals to resort to violence against people different from them. Respondents were also concerned about promoting violence and using it to punish students. These results indicate that a new curriculum must be introduced or at least the curriculum must be modified to address these points.

#### **4.2 Discussion**

The Iraqi educational system was one of the best educational systems in the Middle East during the 1970s. This has changed dramatically because of war and economic situation (Barany, 2013). But years of wars and bad economic situation severely affected the Iraqi educational system. To improve the Iraqi educational system, Iraq must build more schools to host the growing numbers of students, train its teachers to use varying methods of teaching rather than rote memorization and stop using corporal punishment. Iraq must also fight illiteracy and school dropout. To use education to counter terrorism, this study suggests that all school subjects must be reproduced to get rid of any topics that promote violence and a new curriculum must be implemented which can be based on either citizenship education or teaching about religions.

Respondents were aware of this situation. One respondent said that Iraqi education needs to be improved to return to its status during the 1970s. This can be achieved in many ways (Al-

rubae, 2015; Bassem, 2016). First, Iraqi ministry of education has to increase the number of schools in the country. The Iraqi education suffers from school shortages (Alborz et. al, 2013). This has led many students to dropout of schools (Bassem, 2016). If Iraq really wants to bring peace to the country, the government needs to solve these problems because many students prefer dropping out of school rather than studying in a clay school with 60 students and no books.

Second, teachers must stop teaching through rote memorization and use critical thinking instead. If we have a generation of students who can use critical thinking, that generation will be more open-minded and will not be trapped by extremism. Critical thinking can increase their awareness of others and improve their academic achievements. Unfortunately, students who have this characteristic are violently stopped. As a result, they form a very pessimistic view of education. Students are physically punished if they don't do their homework or say something unappealing to the teacher. Iraqi teachers need to vary the educational instruction they use (Alborz, Slee & Miles, 2013). For instance, they can teach using educational games, inquiry-based learning and performance-based assessment where students are not tested using rote memorization. Iraqi teachers are supposed to get training 10 days of training a year. This training is not enough. Teachers' qualifications must be raised to Master's degrees as teachers with Master's degree have more knowledge about their majors and are more experienced in teaching than a teacher with a diploma. Teachers must also take psychology sociology classes as part of training and in order to be able to effectively teach students to be responsible citizens and understand students' problem and find solutions for these problems (Uibu, & Kikas, 2014). Teachers' knowledge about psychology and sociology will enable them to understand students' needs and what problems students face that affects their learning. Experienced teachers will

know that problems that students face can hinder their learning not that students are just lazy and do not want to learn.

Third, Iraqi teachers must immediately stop using physical punishment and teaching texts that promote violence. Last, Iraqi teachers need to be trained before they start teaching. Teachers need to be trained how to depart from rote memorization to modern methods of teaching like using critical thinking. They also need to be trained how to deal with students without resorting to violence. To solve the problem of the excessive use of violence and punishment in Iraqi schools, it is very important that the Ministry of Education and school districts look for alternative ways to reinforce positive behavior. Iraq must tighten laws against illiteracy. Addressing these issues can possibly decrease illiteracy and dropout of schools that can lead individuals to join terrorist groups.

This study finds that the majority of respondents think that there is a relationship between the Iraqi educational system and the spread of terrorism in the country. This result supports previous claims that education is also responsible on the rise of terrorism (Brockhoff et al, 2015) Respondents justified that by saying that books taught for Islamic Education and history are filled with passages that promotes hatred toward non-muslim and promote using violence against them. This result supports Barany (2013) who cited a story of two school children in Baghdad. One child is Muslim named Ahmed and the other one is Christian named Zuhair. Ahmed said that his Islamic Education teacher told him not to befriend people from other religions. Ahmed also said that what he studies in Islamic Education makes him think that he is going to kill Zuhair (by Jihad) as he is not Muslim. This is a clear evidence that Education in Iraq is partly responsible for terrorism.



The study also found that the majority think that improving the Iraqi educational system can prevent people from becoming terrorists. They support this claim by saying that using physical punishments need to be stopped. Physical punishment is a prevalent way to achieve discipline in schools around the world (Abrifor, 2008). This study found that physical punishment and bad relationship between the teacher and students can make these students adopt aggressive behavior as it affects their psychological wellbeing and lead them to become violent or resort to terrorism (Abrifor, 2008; Ba-Saddik & Hattab, 2013). Therefore, teachers must become mentors, not cops, which will make schools safe haven for students and increase their willingness to study (Freire, 1998)

Additionally, this study found that many respondents think it is important that Islamic Education must be either modified to include other religions or dropped from schools. Many respondents said that Islamic Education must become “Religions Class”. This supports Barany (2013) who suggested that religious education needs to be modified to accommodate non-Muslim student. Students must be introduced to other religions to make them more open minded. This same result agrees with the Dwryan Organization second conference which suggested modifying the curriculum and closing religious schools (Malazada, 2016).

This study gives three suggestions. First, all school materials must be reproduced to delete anything that fuels sectarianism, teaches violence or promotes hatred against non-muslims in Iraq. This was also suggested by both the Dwryan Organization second conference (Malazada, 2016) and Barany (2013). Second, physical punishment must be completely banned and teachers must be trained to teach effectively. Teachers need to be informed about the modern ways of teaching. They also need to know how to solve disputes non-violently. Teachers can work with

their students to establish rules for the class that students can not violate. This will make students feel responsible that they do not make any problems in the class.

Third, a new curriculum needs to be implemented in order to be used to substitute Islamic Education, history and National Education. This curriculum must help introduce students to different points of views and different cultures and religions. Non-denominational religious education can be used in school subjects like history, National Education, and Islamic education (Kodelja, 2012). For this curriculum to be successful to work as counter terrorism, it must be taught using modern curriculum frameworks, and Inquiry-based education or Performance-based assessment. This type of curriculum cannot be implemented without unifying the educational systems to be inclusive, secular, neutral and promote pluralism in the country. Without unifying the Iraqi educational system, it would be impossible to implement any changes because there are many sub-systems that will never accept such a curriculum. Hard-core Sunni and Shi'a religious men who run religious schools will perceive this curriculum as a threat to their authority. All of these features can be achieved by teaching religions not one religion. It can also be achieved by teaching Secular Ethics a class taught in Finland that teaches human rights, tolerance, and justice (Zilliacus, & Kallioniemi, 2016)

Besides, this curriculum must give students and teachers alike the freedom to choose what they read. While teaching this curriculum, teachers and educators must think of the goals of learning rather than the curriculum itself. Teachers must pay attention to what students need to learn to transfer to their life after school. They can give a task to complete like giving a presentation or writing a paper or involving in a class debate. These tasks will give the students the autonomy and the ability to make a decision independently. These tasks will improve students critical thinking abilities. Studies have shown that critical thinking help people become

better decision makers (Crenshaw et. al, 2011; Bailin, 1993). It also makes people autonomous in their decision making and do not easily be deceived by criminal groups (Ashoor, 2016; Norris 1989; Crenshaw et. al, 2011; Bailin 1993).

This study also suggests that this curriculum should be based on citizenship education. The Iraqi educational system lacks a subject that teaches citizenship education. Although National Education in public schools and Human Rights and Democracy for university students are similar to citizen education. But both are taught for a different purpose. National Education usually teaches the political system in Iraq. While Human Rights and Democracy teaches students how different religions treat humans. Citizenship education will make students aware of other ethnic and religious groups. Here we look at each of the issues and how the scholarship has looked at them.

#### **4.2.1 Introduce students to different points of views and different cultures and religions**

Iraq is a multi-ethnic country (Barany, 2013). Iraqi population is divided into different ethnic and religious groups. Ethnically, Iraqis are divided into Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Assyrians, and Chaldeans, Lur (Failies), Armenians, and Shabak. Some ethnicities are unfortunately not recognized either by the constitution or by the Public (Barany, 2013). Religiously, Iraqis are divided into Muslims with two main sects Sunni and Shi'a, Christians with different sects, Yazidis, Mandaean, Baha'i faith and Jews who were forced to leave the country in the forties and fifties (Barany, 2013). Minorities like Christians, Yazidis and Mandeans have been always subject to discrimination and suffering. Many of them have left the country to safer places in neighboring countries. During Saddam's regime, they were prohibited from teaching or speaking their languages and they have to choose to be called either Arabs or Kurds (Hanish, 2009).

Unfortunately, this diversity is not represented equally in Iraqi Education. Students learn about the Arab-Muslim history and the history of Ancient Iraq throughout their educational journey. But they never learn about the different ethnic groups in the country or their histories. There were instances where these different ethnicities were included but it was a complete failure. There is one school subject called “National Education” where students learn about the political system and population in Iraq. The representation of Iraqi population in National Education was just recently added and it does not mention all the groups but it mentions only the groups with high population. However, most schools ignore teaching this subject as the time of the class is used to teach subjects like math and English.

Being a diverse country, Iraqi education must exhibit that diversity. Students must be familiar with others’ differences, points of view, different political movements, and ideologies. In other words, Iraqi education must become multi-cultural. This will ultimately help students decide which political ideology appeals to them. It will also help students avoid being brainwashed by one ideology. Throughout its history, Iraq was governed by one political party. These political parties imposed their vision on education by spreading hatred about “others” (Al-Daami & Stanley, 1998); Mohammed-Marzouk, 2012). Sadly, this has led to the expulsion of the Jews and Lurs from Iraq. If students understand that it is good to accept others’ points of view, this will make these students aware of others. If the previous generations were educated about this issue, this would prevent all the turmoil that hit Iraq and would prevent the country from losing its minorities.

Barany (2013) examined the Iraqi curriculum and especially religious education. He concluded that Iraqi educational system is mono-cultural and mono-religious. Only Islamic Arabic culture and history are taught. He came up with suggestions to improve the educational

system to be inclusive to other religious groups. He suggested that the syllabus must reflect multiculturalism and multi-religion and promote awareness and dialogue between Iraqis. Other religions must be taught along with Islam. This must be done objectively in such a way that other religions are not discriminated against and promote the fact that all religions are good and no one religion is superior to the other. He also suggested that the Iraqi educational system must be changed to “prepare all students to be citizens who genuinely believe in Iraqi citizenship, love and peace” (464).

Moving toward multicultural education can benefit not only the educational system but the Iraqi society and leads to ethnic harmony. Multicultural education gives equal chances for male and female students as well as minority students to succeed in schools (Chamberlin, 2008 cited from Banks and Banks 2001). Multicultural education will teach students to respect others’ differences (Chamberlin, 2008) Baker (1994) stressed the importance of teaching schools kids to respect others’ differences. He stated that kids who study about diversity will less likely become ignorant in their lives. This is exactly what Iraqi school kids need. Iraqi students need to study diversity in their country so they become appreciative citizens to such diversity.

#### **4.2.2 Unify the educational systems to be inclusive, secular, neutral and promote pluralism in the country**

As a result of diversity in the country, there is no one unified educational system. In Fact, it can be said that there are three main educational systems in Iraq. The first one is the Public educational system where Arabic is the language of instruction. In the second one, other languages like Kurdish, Turkmen and Syriac are the main languages of instruction. The third one is based on either religion or sect. Previously, there were Christian schools but were mostly nationalized by the Baathist party (Hanish, 2009). Nowadays, there is a rise in the number or

religious schools which are based on either Sunni or Shi'a Islam. Only in public education, students from all religions and ethnicities are allowed to study together. Even in public education, non-muslim students are not allowed in classes where religion is taught. In Final exams, they do not write the exam for the subject of religion. And as a result, students do not benefit from the grades. If teachers allow students to attend religion classes. This has huge psychological impact on students as they are perceived as different from an early age (Barany, 2013). It also deepens the ethnic and religious divide in the Iraqi society. Since the country is trying to establish social peace among the different groups, Education must be the first step.

The Iraqi Educational system must be unified so that students at a young age can engage in conversation with each other. Iraqi schools can move toward shared or even bilingual education. All religious and ethnic groups can be given equal opportunities to study their cultures together in one educational system. Shared citizenship education can be the solution since instills the idea that citizens share the same fate and at the same time promotes students differences. Therefore, its purpose is not to indoctrinate students to one ideology. But rather, it tries to teach them that they have common things as being citizens of the same nation (Ben-Porath, 2012). Shared citizenship education also popularizes the fact that people's past and presents lives are connected with each other. This is true to the Iraqi society where different groups have lived together for centuries but their coexistence is threatened by terrorism. This same approach could be adopted by the Iraqi educational system to decrease the hostilities among different groups. It can also promote awareness about other minorities in the country.

Baumann (2013) looked at examples of shared education in different conflicts in the world and whether shared education initiatives can overcome divisions in these conflicts. Different authors were asked to investigate such divisions. He found that the success and failure

in these initiatives depends on factors like the nature of conflict and language as well. He found that teaching shared education will help students become accustomed to differences and see it as something normal. Education policy makers in Iraq must look at these examples to come up with a shared and bilingual educational system that treats all students equally and support their success. They must also avoid the mistakes done in these initiatives.

Secularizing education is now very popular (Seo, 2014). The Iraqi educational system must also become more secular and educate students about what brings them together not what bring them apart. In the U.S.A, France, Slovenia and Australia, education is secular where confessional or denominational religious education is not taught (Kodelja, 2012; Durham Jr., et al., 2008). Finland has already adopted secular education where students have the right to attend secular ethics education which is offered to unaffiliated students. In this class, students study about “human rights, tolerance, justice and sustainable development, as well as the cultures and personal worldviews in the immediate environment” (Zilliacus, & Kallioniemi, 2016). Some aspects of secular ethics can be adopted into the Iraqi educational system to make it inclusive and promote awareness about other people in the country. Adopting secular education in Iraq will also ensure that nobody will feel left out or unwelcomed. If the Iraqi educational system becomes secular, this does not mean that religion is never taught, but religion has to be taught objectively that it does not lead students to be totalitarian. This must be accompanied with a policy that makes education inclusive.

Inclusive education gives students from different backgrounds equal opportunities (Waitoller, & Artiles, 2013). This means that all students must be treated the same and no group of students are given more rights or treated differently. Many educational systems aspire to become inclusive (Rambla, Ferrer, Tarabini and Verger, 2008). Inclusive education must allow

students from both genders, minority students, students with health problems and disabilities, and even refugee students to have access to education equally (Alborz et. al, 2013). Iraqi educational system needs to be more inclusive to minority students since these minority citizens were the most affected by war in the country (Barany, 2013). Addressing these issues will automatically promote pluralism in the country. This will not only benefit minorities, it will also make students more careful when following certain ideologies because what extremist ideology promotes is hatred to people different from its adherents.

#### **4.2.3 Stop promoting the culture of violence in the curriculum and exterminate the use of physical punishment**

Although, these are two separate issues that need to be addressed, it is important that these two issues are tackled together and equally. Students in Iraqi schools always read and hear about violent events in history in such a way that make them value the culture of violence in history books. Many respondents raised their concern that history books are filled with passages that promote violence. These passages need to be rewritten in such a way that they do not promote violence because studying history is supposed to be used to teach people their past and how to take lessons from it (Page, 2000). Unfortunately, this is not the case all the time. In many countries, history is taught to know the “glorious past” of the nation. This is exactly the case in Iraq where history books are about the violent battles of history as being divine and beneficial to the society (Page, 2000). The alternative should be teaching history objectively and without any bias to favor one group and let students find lessons from these wars. It is also important that teachers give students a chance to imaginatively reconstruct history by trying to find alternative ways to solve the problems that lead to wars. This will help students improve their critical thinking and always look for alternative solutions rather than resorting to violence.



Thinking of the Iraqi educational system, non-violent education must be taught to students. Smith (2001) conducted a study about using non-violent education. First, she picked 30 at-risk students. Then, they were given a survey to complete. A pilot group was given the same survey. The survey was read to both groups. A one-day presentation was given to the pilot group. Whereas, the 30 at-risk students were given nine weeks of training using Kingian nonviolent techniques that the researcher developed. Students were given pre and post tests. The main objective for this program was to increase awareness about non-violent techniques to solve problems and misunderstanding. Using data like questionnaires, direct observation checklist and teachers questionnaires, Smith found out that students in the study group showed a significant increase in the results of post test from the pre-test. These results show that teaching through non-violent education can benefit students. It helps them become aware of techniques to solve disagreement peacefully. This kind of curriculum would benefit Iraqi education, not only students but teachers as well by teaching them to find alternative solutions to problems they face in their lives.

In Iraqi schools, all that students experience is violence. They are taught to accept violence in history books as something they must be proud of. Another type of violence students experience is corporal punishment. Often, students are violently punished for every minor mistake they make. Although it is not allowed by the Ministry of Education, violence or physical or corporal punishment is still prevalent in Iraqi schools. Violence in schools can be defined as any form of violence committed either by teachers or students that can lead to physical and psychological harm to either teachers or students or damage to school property (Mncube and Netshitangani, 2014). Physical or corporal punishment is usually carried out by teachers against students although it is labeled as child abuse by the World Health Organization (Mncube and

Netshitangani, 2014, cited from (WHO 2002). According to the Nabaa Website, “the reason behind these practices is the lack of educational understanding that qualifies them to understand human rights and its importance.” And it is true that teachers don’t understand the concept of human rights and that these young children are human beings who must be respected. These teachers don’t know that the violence and disrespect they use against these young kids will impact their lives forever. This usually happens when students make noise, forget to bring books and notebooks, and fail exams. Some teachers are very violent. There were many incidents that sparked outrage on Media and Social media. These incidents have led the Iraqi Ministry of Education to fire these violent teachers. There is actually no evidence that these teachers were actually fired. Every time there is such an incident, the Ministry of Education forms investigation committees but nobody knows the result or decisions these committees make.

Teachers think that physical punishment can help achieve discipline in the class. According to Abrifor (2008) and Mncube and Netshitangani (2014) scholars do not agree on the benefits and harms of physical punishment. Abrifor (2008) conducted a study to see what teachers think about using physical punishment in schools. The subjects of the study were 247 teachers. They were given a questionnaire. Abrifor (2008) found out that teachers still believe that physical punishment is the best and easiest way of achieving discipline in the school. Unfortunately, this shows that some teachers still believe in such cruel treatment which negatively affects the psychological wellbeing of students (Ekanem & Edet, 2013; Ba-Saddik & Hattab, 2013; Mncube and Netshitangani, 2014). Feinstein, & Mwachombela (2010) conducted a study about the use of corporal punishment in schools in Tanzania. They surveyed 254 teachers and 194 students. They also interviewed 14 teachers and 14 students. This study found that corporal punishment is the most prevalent form of punishment used in schools. The study also

found that students do not like corporal punishment. They thought it is ineffective and it negatively affected their emotions.

More studies proved the negative effects of physical punishment. Ekanem & Edet, (2013) determined the effects of corporal punishment on discipline achievement in schools in Nigeria. They surveyed 250 teachers from 14 public schools and 8 private schools. The study found that corporal punishment is the most common type of punishment used to achieve discipline. They also confirmed the ineffectiveness of physical punishment “to achieve disciplinary behavior” (p. 24)

What is worth mentioning here is that violence against teachers must also stop. Throughout my life, I have witnessed and heard how some parents and even students attacked teachers and schools because their children failed exams. Hence, respect for teachers is very important and instead students, teachers and parents must engage in a meaningful conversation to improve the educational experiences of students. The government must also support and respect teachers and improve their economic life (Freire, 1998). Respect for teachers can potentially lead to a meaningful and democratic conversation that benefits the Iraqi educational system and Iraqi society.

#### **4.2.4 Think of the goals of education by using different curriculum designs and frameworks**

David Prideaux (2003) stated that “The curriculum represents the expression of educational ideas in practice” (para. 1). This definition clearly shows that curriculum is used to express certain educational ideas through teaching. Unfortunately, in Iraq, teachers teach the subject without thinking of what goals they want to achieve because there is no clear policy behind education. Teachers also use the same curriculum in the whole country. Simply, teachers and students alike are given books which are designed by committees assigned by the Ministry

of Education. These books are arranged by chapters according to the subject. Teachers then assign certain number of pages and ask students to memorize them. Failing to memorize and recite these pages often lead to punishing students. Students are also required to write what they memorized in exams and quizzes. Teachers are neither encouraged nor permitted to be innovative as from time to time they are visited by education supervisors who make sure teachers are strictly following the book. This curriculum needs to be changed to be more flexible to accommodate all students (Alborz et. al, 2013).

Therefore, it is very important that the Iraqi Ministry of Education sets goals or standards for all school subjects. Standards will prevent the decline of education that is happening in Iraq for the last four decades (Zuckerman, 1996). These standards must be directed toward improving the educational system and teaching students to be good critical thinkers and aware of problems their society suffer from. The Ministry of Education must train teachers to achieve these goals and standards. This will ultimately help improve the quality of education in the country. Teacher must think of what goal they are trying to achieve from the lessons they teach. For instance, they can use reading\writing classes not only to teach the students how to comprehend texts and write essays, they can use it to raise students' awareness of certain issues they encounter in their lives.

Iraqi education is very authoritarian in that teachers adamantly control the class. Authoritarian education leaves no room for students to be pioneers or innovative. Therefore, it is important that teachers, whether novice or experienced, are informed and trained about different curriculum designs. Teachers need to be annually trained and be updated of the new improvement in the field of education. They also need to know that curriculum has four important elements which are "content; teaching and learning strategies; assessment processes; and evaluation processes" (David Prideaux, 2003, p. 4). Teachers must be well-informed about

these elements and especially assessments and evaluations. In other words, teacher should not randomly give exams, but they need to know what are the goals behind these exams.

When talking about the different types of curriculums, Iraqi teachers and educators must know that there are two types. The first one is the pluralistic curriculum which is concerned with societal issues and social justice. Using this curriculum approach is especially important to teaching social studies since it is concerned with social issues. Incorporating this approach in Iraqi school can be very effective in teaching subjects like history and religion. Using Pluralistic curriculum, students can learn about others. Ensuring that students learn about others can have a great impact on the society. Students will ultimately learn that they are equal to other people. The other type is called Unitarian approach. This approach is best used to transmit knowledge about certain issues to students. It can be used to teach about minorities, the country's history and even geography (Motamed, et al., 2013). The Iraqi educational system is more Unitarian as it is focusing more on the country's history and patriotism. The positive side of using such curriculum is that it deals with internal issues that students need to be familiar with like the country's minorities. Therefore, a combination of both can be used and backed up with a clear policy that encourages pluralism in the educational system.

The goals of education can be achieved when teachers know how to use different curriculum designs and frameworks. Therefore, it is very important to train teachers to use different curriculum frameworks such as "Backward Design". Backward design is based on the Understanding by Design (UbD). As it is described, UbD is "a way of thinking purposefully about curricular planning" (Wiggins and McTighe, 2011, p. 3). This means that using UbD gives a different perspective about how curriculum is designed. It also gives importance to the goals not the curriculum itself. In other words, teachers and educators must specify the goals that they

want to achieve from teaching certain subjects and not merely throw out things without thinking of the result. For instance, when teaching history and religion, teachers must target the topics that students can benefit from in their daily life. Topics that can teach them to respect others' point of view, help them and accept them no matter how different they are from him or her.

The goals of education can also be achieved if teachers are encouraged to use inquiry-based education to achieve certain goals. For instance, if a science teacher wants to educate students about environmental change, he\she can start with a question that triggers curiosity in the students. In this way, teacher will achieve the goals of education and keep students motivated and engaged (Billman, 2008).

A very important issue about Iraqi education is the type of assessment it utilizes. In Iraqi schools, traditional assessments are used which is summative by nature. Students are expected to read the materials and answer the questions provided. This type of assessment usually takes place monthly and yearly. Only in English, Arabic and Islamic Education, students are given points for their participation. Summative assessment is used after the learning has occurred. It is used to determine whether students learned the material or not. Therefore, it is important to use other types of assessment like formative and performance-based assessment. Formative assessment is used during the learning process (Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005; Clinchot, Ngai, Huie, Talanquer, Lambertz, Banks, Sevia,2017; Antoniou, & James, 2014) Iraqi education would benefit from using formative assessment as teachers will know if their students are learning the concepts they are teaching or not. It will also benefit students by removing the burden of aimless exams. This type of assessment can be coupled with Performance-based assessment where students are coming with a product as a result of their learning such as presentation, paper and class debates (Espinosa, 2015). Performance-based assessment “asks

students to take their learning far beyond knowledge and basic skills” (Burtz and Marshall, 1997, p. 1). Students can make a presentation, write a paper or make a class debate about specific issues the teachers wants them to know about. In this way, students’ learning can be enhanced. Not only this, students can also become more self-confident as they show their product (Espinosa, 2015).

Iraqi educational system need to benefit from other educational systems. Educators in Iraq can follow the experience of the Finnish educational system. Finland has one of the best educational systems in the world (Kager, 2013). Sjøby (2015) stated that Finnish education was not developed until it underwent reform. It was the minister of education Krista Kiuru who announced that students need to have more time to play educational games (Sjøby, 2015). The reform includes reducing school hours where students study only 4 hours a day. They do not have homework. They also do not take exams. Instead, they are assessed using diagnostic, formative and summative assessment in the class. The assessments result into reports that teachers submit to the class (Kager, 2013).

#### **4.2.5 Use of Critical Thinking and Educational Games**

Critical thinking is becoming popular in education. Teachers and educators use critical thinking to motivate students to learn and become engaged in the class. Feinstein (2014) defines critical thinking as “the process of thinking about any subject matter and the ability to analyze and evaluate an outcome that is meaningful and well-reasoned.” In other words, critical thinking is the ability to reason and evaluate before making decisions about issues students may face and find solutions to them that comes from deep thinking. Norris and Eninis (1989) also defined critical thinking as “reasonable and reflective thinking that is focused upon deciding what to believe or do” (p.1) This definition reveals that critical thinkers have certain characteristics like

being reasonable, reflective, and focused. A good thinker would be the person who relies on reasons when thinking or deciding something (Norris and Eninis, 1989; Crenshaw et. al, 2011) They also must be ready to examine the reasons behind their and others' thinking.

Scholars and educators agree that critical thinking is reasonable and reflective but they don't agree on its nature. Some scholars think of critical thinking as "subject-matter specific, a general facility across different subjects or a combination of both" (Norris 1989, p. 21). This means that there are varying abilities and disposition for every subject if it is subject-matter specific. But if it is general facility then all abilities and dispositions can be used, applied, and transferred to both school and out-of-school subjects. This means that students can easily use their learned critical thinking ability to solve their problems and life issues. In addition to that, students will be able to reason and reflect on their study and what they are going to achieve with it. Critical thinking can transform students' lives and enable them to think beyond the text they are reading. It will enable them to understand why they are learning the text and how they can use it to add to their experiences.

Critical thinking is a skill that every student can develop. It may vary from one person to the other but everybody has some sort of critical thinking skill. There are many studies about critical thinking in education. Sarigoz (2012) wanted to find out the critical thinking skills of high schoolers. He surveyed 722 high schools students in Hakkari. The respondents were from four schools. He found that oftentimes students encounter problems without being able to overcome them or solve them. He suggested that students need to take critical thinking classes that help them think, reason and evaluate problems they face in their lives.

One problem young people in Iraq face is terrorism. As critical thinking can benefit people to become better decision makers who make choices with less mistakes (Crenshaw, Hale



and Harper, 2011; Bailin, 1993), teaching critical thinking in schools can be the best solution for the problem of religious fundamentalism. But, in Iraqi schools, students are supposed to memorize the reading (Mohammed-Marzouk, 2012). In his article, Ashoor (2016) stated that the relationship between terrorism and education is not direct. But education is partly responsible as it makes people easily accept extremist ideology. He also noted that using critical thinking can be the answer to counter terrorism in these societies.

Many educators support teaching critical thinking in schools (Sarigoz, 2012; Snyder & Snyder, 2008). They think of it as educational ideal as it the main purpose of both education as critical thinking is to transform people's lives and make people independent in their decision making. Teaching critical thinking will ultimately enable students to be autonomous in what they want to achieve in their lives and also think in the way they like (Norris 1989; Crenshaw et al., 2011; Bailin, 1993). Unfortunately, Iraqi students are taught to memorize texts and never encouraged to think critically. Mohammed-Marzouk, (2012) stated that using rote memorization in schools "hinders students' cognitive ability to think critically" (p. 260). This needs to be stopped immediately because students are harmed and encouraged to accept information without thinking. However, this study suggests that critical thinking must be taught and using in teaching help Iraqi students decide about their thinking and how they deal with other people in the community.

Students' critical thinking abilities can potentially be increased by using Inquiry-based education. Lampert (2013) examined inquiry-based learning and its relationship to students' critical thinking ability. She wanted to see if inquiry-based learning deepens critical thinking ability. She based her research on the assumption that Art students are more open minded. She and her eight undergraduate students designed an after school art curriculum. She taught the

curriculum for 10 students from a poor neighborhood. As part of the program that lasted for 12 weeks, students were given critical thinking test for elementary school kids. The students took the test twice. The result of the second test revealed that students showed increase in their critical thinking. Such study proves that using inquiry-based curriculum has many advantages. It can direct the education to certain goals. But, it can also can increase students' critical thinking ability.

Teaching critical thinking will be the best remedy for the ethnic and religious tension between the different groups in the country. As many people fell in the trap of sectarian hatred, teaching critical thinking, and include it in teaching school subjects will ultimately help students understand that other people are equal to them and resorting to violence to end any kind of disagreement will not be the best solution. A good critical thinker is the person who thinks of others' views openly and respect their difference. A good critical thinker is also the person who reasons things and is not concerned only about conclusions because many details will be lost. The person who makes critical thinking the main part of his\her thinking is a successful person in problem solving. With lots of problems and issues facing the country, it is very important to train the new generation to find solutions to the problems facing the country. If Iraqi students are taught how to reason and reflect about everything, they would ultimately be able to understand and evaluate the political ideologies they are introduced to. This goal will ultimately make the Iraqi educational system an ideal educational system. But the use of critical thinking has to be backed up by a clear educational policy that encourages neutral and secular education and avoid indoctrinating students to adopt one ideology. In fact, some educators warn about teaching "dangerous ideas" that indoctrinate students to certain ideologies like religious fundamentalism, Marxism, and Communism (Siegel, 1988).

Teaching and incorporating critical thinking in schools can be best achieved by using educational games and warm up activities. Educational games are any game that can be used for educational purposes. They are also called “Serious games” (Paiva, Flores, Barbosa, & Ribeiro, 2016). Serious games are easy and more fun and they motivate students to learn. They also increase the storage of the learned materials. Due to the fact that Iraqi schools lack technology, it is not possible to use any kind of electronic or online games. Instead, teachers can use different types of warm up activities for delivering the materials. In this way students will be motivated to learn and will stay on the task.

#### **4.2.6 Freedom to choose from a variety of books**

The Iraqi educational system must be liberated from the years of imposing one ideology. This will help Iraq in its transition toward democracy. As the youth is the core of the society, education can give them the opportunity to have democratic representation and have their voices heard which they can benefit later in their life and their participation within the political system (Darder, 2015). Many studies have shown that education is an important factor to achieve democracy because educated individuals tend to have more political participation (Castello-Climent, 2008; Lutz, et al., 2010). Castello-Climent (2008) empirically studied the relationship between education and democracy. He examined data from 104 countries. He found that there is a positive relationship between educated majority and democracy in their countries.

Giving schools freedom to operate can greatly benefit the educational system in Iraq. Freire advocated the liberation of education. He talked about one of his visits to “alternative high school” in New York city. He said that many young people dreamed of joining these schools. This is because students are given freedom and they are not being policed by the school administration. Teachers were free to choose their curriculum. They did not use textbooks but

rather used newspapers, magazines, and books. Not only that, the relationship between the students and their teachers was positive. This has made the school a safe haven for the students (Freire, 1998). Iraqi schools need to adopt these same liberal measures. Students and teachers must be given freedom to choose what they want to read. But this freedom has to be controlled so that teachers do not misuse it to spread their ideology especially extremist ones.

As it is already mentioned, all the materials used in Iraqi schools are already chosen by committees assigned by the Ministry of education. Therefore, it is important to liberate the Iraqi educational system from the power of the state. This can be achieved by giving teachers freedom to choose what they teach depending on students' preferences. The ministry of education can offer a variety of books for every grade level and leave the choice to students and teachers to choose what books they want to study. These materials can be about different subjects like politics, economics, society, religions, and pluralism. This can help humanize education and make students more willing to learn (Darder, 2015). It can also help transform these students into responsible citizens who are willing to change their lives and their societies to the better because schools, according to Freire, are places where the dominant political ideology is instilled (Darder, 2015). Liberating education to embrace many ideologies will assist Iraq into the transition toward democracy. After years of single political ideology, Iraqi society needs to be introduced to different thoughts that challenge the existing and dominant one.

I would suggest teachers and educators to use books like "*A Long Way Gone*". It is an excellent book that describes a transformation journey of a young boy who once fought in the civil war in Sierra Leone. That young boy is Ishmael Beah, the author himself. He not only fought in war but also participated in war crimes. This is probably not very unfamiliar to some young men in Iraq. As a result of war, many young men were indoctrinated and pushed to fight

with all sides of the conflict. Ishmael Beah, the author, had a chance to be saved by emigrating to the United States. But for hundreds of young men and women that is just impossible to happen. It is through this book and others that students can find meaning for their life and resort to peace rather violence. I would also suggest including books about the different religions in the country and the world. These have to be books that were written by people from that religion to be as objective as possible. In addition, I would highly recommend teaching novels written by Iraqi novelists such as Dhu Nun Ayub, Samir Naqash, Hassan Blasim, and Ahmed Saadawi to inspire students to follow the same path these writers followed.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

This chapter presents the conclusion of the study some suggestions that the Iraqi Ministry of Education must follow to improve the Iraqi educational system. It also offers some future implication and further research that must be conducted to find the relationship between education and terrorism in Iraq. Additionally, this chapter presents the limitations of the study.

### **5.1 Overview**

This thesis explores an important issue in the world today which is the relationship between education and the spread of terrorism. Since scholars do not agree on the existence of such a relationship, it is important to find out how people in one country think of the relationship between education and terrorism. Iraqi respondents were asked about this issue. The majority of respondents think that there is a relationship between education and terrorism in Iraq. The study also found that the majority think that improving education is vital to stop the spread of terrorism among people in Iraq. It is also to be concluded that many issues need to be addressed to improve the Iraqi educational system to make it resistant to terrorism. An important issue is the promotion of violence in the curriculum. Many respondents clearly stated their concerns about violence in history books and Islamic Education books. Some respondents even stated that it is one of the reasons that many become violent and join terrorist groups. The curriculum and the type of instruction in the Iraqi educational system must also be changed to strengthen students' critical thinking ability.

It can also be concluded that the Iraqi educational system must be unified and secularized in a way that no students feels that he\she is segregated against. It is also important that school

subjects like Islamic Education, National Education and history must be changed. There are many alternatives that the Ministry of Education can adopt. For instance, the Ministry of Education can change Islamic Education into Teaching about Religions and National Education into Shared Citizenship Education. History books can be modified in a way that do not include sensitive issues to minorities or that promote or encourage violence. Therefore, it is very important that history books are rewritten and taught in a way that encourage students to think that all groups in the country have a shared history and a shared future. This will help increase students' understanding and awareness of other people and decrease the possibility of conflicts.

### **5.2 Future implications**

It is very important that more studies are conducted to find what aspects of education needs to be improved to address the issue of terrorism and how education might fuel it. The curriculum must be closely studied to find out the debatable passages that encourage violence that many respondents hinted at. A statistical study of terrorists and their academic backgrounds need to be conducted to find out the relationship between education and terrorism. Terrorists in Iraqi prisons must also be surveyed and interviewed to find out the reasons why they chose to become terrorists. All of these studies can give a holistic picture of the reasons of the spread of terrorism. If these studies were conducted and the relationship between education and terrorism is confirmed, the Iraqi educational system must be improved to address the findings of these studies. Otherwise, the suffering of innocent Iraqis will continue forever.

### **5.3 Limitation**

This study was conducted to find out what Iraqi people think about the relationship between education and terrorism. The study also aims to find out if Iraqi people think that the Iraqi

education needs to be improved. Since the survey was delivered through Facebook, the study might be subjective for certain reasons. The first reason is that not all Iraqis have access to the internet. Therefore, only the privileged individuals who can access the internet could ultimately answer the survey. The second reason is that young people are far more represented on social media and could access and answer the survey. The survey might not be accessible by older generation. In addition to that, respondents from one province were more than other. For instance, more than a quarter of respondents were from Baghdad. Other provinces were not represented equally. This makes the survey not representing the actual population in each province. Again, this might be because some respondents from certain provinces have more access to the Internet and social media than other respondents from other respondents. Therefore, these two reasons make the result subjective as not all Iraqis could have accessed the survey.



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