

# Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills among Grade 11 Senior High School Students Through Teacher-Initiated Questions in Teaching Introduction to World Religion and Belief Systems

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*Abstract* —Critical thinking skills is one of the skills need to develop among students as part of the aim in the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. It is the ability to analyze, evaluate and form well-reasoned judgements or decisions which is developed and enhanced through the teacher-initiated questions in the teaching-learning process. These skills are crucial for making informed choices, solving complex problems, and navigating various aspects of life. The supposed skills needed to be enhanced to developed 21<sup>st</sup> century learners who will be navigating life to be able to counteract the issues and challenges brought about by time. Thus, this study was formulated to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher-initiated questions in enhancing the critical thinking skills of the Grade 11 Senior High School students in Introduction to World Religion and Belief System. A quasi-experimental research design was employed utilizing simple percentage and t-test of mean difference as statistical tools used to interpret the result of the study. The study revealed a significant difference in the performances of Grade 11 Senior High School students in Introduction to World Religion and Belief System before and after the utilization of teacher-initiated questions in teaching. The art of questioning of teachers during the teaching-learning process through the teacher-initiated questions which helps students to evaluate, judge, analyze and synthesized the information on a given situation had helped in enhancing the critical thinking skills of Grade 11 Senior High School students. Thus, making the intervention an effective teaching strategy in enhancing the critical thinking skills, hence, improving their performance in the subject.

*Keywords* — *Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills, Grade 11 Senior High School Students, Teacher-Initiated Questions, Teaching, Introduction, World Religion, Belief System*

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## I. Introduction

The Department of Education formulated the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum to develop critical thinking among the students specifically in the senior high school. Developing

critical thinking is one of the most central goals of education across grade levels today. To foster critical thinking among students, teachers should be equipped with the knowledge and skills in their day-to-day activity in school. They must be critical thinkers first. Thus, critical thinking should be essential aspect of teachers training and professional development activities.

Critical thinking involves the ability to gather and evaluate information, analyze, synthesize, and make informed decisions to achieve the best possible outcomes. Niu (2013) explains that critical thinking skills enable one to self-correct, monitor the rationality of thinking, and reflexivity. These skills allow individuals to reflect on the quality of their thinking to solve analytical problems. The skills are crucial requirements for modern organizations when graduates no longer must solve just routine problems but are faced with an array of dynamic forces (Hammer & Green, 2011).

In the twentieth century, in embracing the industrial revolution 4.0, students are required to possess critical thinking skills to make themselves competitive in their life, whether it is at school or at work (Azmi et al., 2018). According to Facione (2015), critical thinking consists of interpretation, analyses, inference, explanation, and self-control. There are basic skills with which to demonstrate critical thinking, such as identifying problems, seeking solutions to the problem, collecting and compiling related information, acknowledging underlying values and assumptions, analyzing data, examining facts and evaluating questions, understanding and using clear and precise words, understanding causal relationships among problems, drawing conclusions and similarities, assessing drawn similarities and conclusions, rearranging a set of beliefs based on wider experience, and making assessment of certain things and qualities (De Gloppe, 2002). Critical thinking is the acts of self-orientation, self-discipline, self-monitoring, self-correcting thinking. It also requires effective communication, problem-solving skills, and a complete commitment to resisting egocentric and socio-centric tendencies. Therefore, having critical-thinking, students can think more comprehensively, more precisely, deeper, and more logically. They can also make themselves used to having evidence, concepts, methods, and contextual considerations in deciding something which needs interpretations, analyses, inferences, and explanations. Students with such critical thinking are believed to be successful in their study period, working life, and social life.

Promoting students' critical thinking is not easy because it needs to set standard of criteria in evaluating and improving students' rational and analytical skill on facing certain issue. Teachers must change their role not only as the source of learning, but also facilitate, motivate, and stimulate students to develop their knowledge independently so that it will encourage students to think at a higher level. Hence, it is a great challenge for the teachers to modify their way of teaching.

In recent years, several teachers are observing how the students solve several problems in school. It was observed that some of them find difficulty in thinking of solutions and in venturing to research and other ways of solving such problems. With this, the researcher had been thinking on how to enhance the critical thinking skills of the senior high school students, what strategy

could be applied in teaching a certain subject especially in Introduction to World Religion and Belief Systems. Hence, this research was formulated to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher-initiated questions in teaching Introduction to World Religion and Belief Systems in enhancing the critical thinking skills of Grade 11 Senior High School Students. A proposed improvement plan was formulated based on the findings of the study.

It is in the rationale that the researcher who is currently a grade 11 teacher in the above mentioned local, would like to delve worthy research undertaking that will benefit herself, the school she is currently teaching and that of her Graduate Program she is enrolled at.

This study evaluates the effectiveness of teacher-initiated questions in teaching Introduction to World Religion and Belief Systems to enhance the critical thinking skills of Grade 11 Senior High School students in Ormoc City Senior High School, Ormoc District 1, Ormoc City Division for School Year 2023-2024. The findings of the study were the basis for the proposed improvement plan.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the performance of the Grade 11 Senior High School students in Introduction to World Religion and Belief Systems before the utilization of teacher-initiated questions in teaching?
2. What is the performance of the Grade 11 Senior High School students in Introduction to World Religion and Belief Systems after the utilization of teacher-initiated questions in teaching?
3. Is there a significant difference in the performances of the Grade 11 Senior High School students in Introduction to World Religion and Belief Systems before and after the utilization of teacher-initiated questions in teaching?
4. What improvement plan can be proposed based on the findings of this study?

## II. Methodology

**Design.** This study employed the quasi-experimental research design utilizing the pre-test and post-test to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher-initiated questions in teaching Introduction to World Religion and Belief Systems to enhance the critical thinking skills of Grade 11 Senior High School students for School Year 2023-2024. Ormoc City Senior High School, Ormoc District 1, Ormoc City Division is the main locale of the study. The 40 Grade 11 Senior High School students enrolled in the said locale for School Year 2023-2024 are the main respondents of the study. A researcher-made test questions on Introduction to World Religion and Belief Systems was used as pre-test and post-test to determine the performance of the students in Introduction to World Religion and Belief Systems. The competencies embody on the tests were taken from the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) for Grade 11. The 30-item test questions were submitted to the Senior High School coordinator for validation and checking before it was

administered to the students. Moreover, the researcher prepared lesson plans in teaching Introduction to World Religion and Belief Systems highlighting the utilization of teacher-initiated questions. The questions were given to the students orally or in writing. Students answered the questions and the teacher evaluated using rubrics in evaluating critical thinking skills. These materials were submitted to the District Coordinator and Quality Assurance Team for evaluation, validation, and adjustments before it was utilized by the students in the classroom.

This research focused on evaluating the effectiveness of teacher-initiated questions in teaching Introduction to World Religion and Belief Systems to enhance the critical thinking skills of Grade 11 Senior High School students through the pre-test and post-test and its significant difference. A Proposed Improvement Plan based on the findings of the study is the output.

**Sampling.** There are 40 Grade 11 Senior High School students involved in this study. The research instruments were administered face-to-face with consent from the Local IATF and strictly following the prescribed Health Protocol during the face-to-face classes.

**Research Procedure.** The researcher prepared the research design and tools utilized in the study. Approval and recommendation from the Panel of Examiner of the Graduate Studies was sought. A letter request to conduct this study was forwarded to the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent. Upon approval, permission from the District Supervisor and School Head was secured before the actual gathering of data. Orientation of the participants and administration of the pre-test was done face-to-face after the approval of the permit from the parents of the respondents. Data privacy was emphasized also in the meeting. After accomplishing the pre-test, intervention was given within four weeks. The utilization of teacher-initiated questions in teaching Introduction to World Religion and Belief Systems to enhance critical thinking skills of Grade 11 students was emphasized in the study. After the four-week intervention, the post-test was administered. Results of the tests were collected. Data were tallied and submitted for statistical treatment. Analysis and Interpretation of Data. Making of Proposed Improvement Plan followed.

**Ethical Issues.** The researcher properly secured the permission to conduct the study from the authorities through written communication. In the formulation of the intervention materials that was used in the study, the use of offensive, discriminatory, or other unacceptable language was avoided. The respondents' names and other personal data were not included in this study to protect their privacy. Participation of the respondents was also voluntary. Orientation was conducted for the respondents. In the orientation, issues and concerns were addressed and consent to be included in the study were signed. The researcher-maintained objectivity in analyzing and discussing the results. All authors whose works were mentioned in this study were properly quoted and were acknowledged in the reference.

**Treatment of Data.** Simple Percentage was employed to evaluate the performances of the Grade 11 Senior High School students before and after the utilization of teacher-initiated questions in teaching Introduction to World Religion and Belief Systems. **t-Test of Mean Difference** was

used to determine the significant difference in the pre-test and post-test performances of the Grade 11 Senior High School students.

### III. Results and Discussion

**Table 1**  
**Pre-Test Performance of Grade 11 Students**

Score Range	Description	PRETEST	
		Frequency	%
25-30	Excellent	0	0
19-24	Very Good	11	27
13-18	Good	25	63
7-12	Fair	4	10
1-6	Poor	0	0
Total		40	100
<b>Weighted Mean</b>		<b>16.75</b>	<b>Good</b>

Table 1 presents the performance of Grade 11 Senior High School students in Introduction to World Religion and Belief System before the utilization of teacher-initiated questions to enhance their critical thinking skills. It was revealed on the table that among the 40 Grade 11 Senior High School students, 11 or 27% got a score of 19-24 which is very good while 25 or 64% got a score of 13-18 which is good and 4 or 10% got the score of 7-12 which is fair. Further, the table also shows that the performance of Grade 11 Senior High School students in Introduction to World Religion and Belief System before the utilization of teacher-initiated questions to enhance their critical thinking skills got a weighted mean of 16.75 which is interpreted as good. The result of the pre-test performance shows that there are Senior High School students who possess very good critical thinking skills even before the intervention. On the other hand, most of them need intervention activities that will inspire and develop their critical thinking skills. This implies that teachers must provide activities like the teacher-initiated questions in teaching. Based on the recent curriculum (K-12), students of junior and senior high school are required to have critical thinking. Critical thinking is a necessity skill to engage in teaching and learning process because it is beneficial for students' academic achievement and future. It teaches a variety of skills that can be applied in any life situation. As an illustration, when learning in primary or secondary school, students need strong critical thinking skill to process every knowledge effectively which includes analyzing and evaluating information of certain issue, taking rationale judgment, and finding problem solving. It is in line with Choy & Cheah (2009) that critical thinking is a complex process which requires a higher level of cognitive skill to process information. Critical thinking skills allow

children to observe and process the information they receive and eventually convert them into attitudes (Han & Brown, 2013; Ridley, 2006; Walsh, Murphy, & Dunbar, 2007). Good critical thinking patterns will also encourage children to become problem solvers. Such children who are accustomed to being problem solvers are less dependent on other people in dealing with problems (Nabilah, 2020; Sugiyarti et al., 2018). Hence, we need teachers who have good pedagogical skills to stimulate critical thinking skills in children. Good pedagogical skills develop a teacher's ability to understand children as well as to actualize their potential. One of the pedagogic skills that teachers must have been questioning skills (Fadlila, Palupi, & Hafidah, 2019; Kamarulzaman, 2015; Kamarulzaman, Ahmad, & Kamarulzaman, 2014; Lewis, 2007; Santoso, Yuanita, & Erman, 2018; Yunita, Meilanie, & Fahrurrozi, 2019). However, in the current teaching situation, teachers have very limited questioning skills. Their questions are confined to routine activities or such basic questions about the daily news, current date, or the day. These questions are mostly closed-ended questions that require a child to answer with one or two words like 'yes' and 'no' or choose one of the options. Past research studies also pointed out at this problem stating that many teachers have not mastered advanced questioning skills, and that questions asked by the teacher are often limited to basic questions such as guru questions to initiate or open lessons (Cahyani, Nurjaya, & Sriasih, 2016; Prasetyaningarum & Rohita, 2014; Sunarto & Rohita, 2021)

**Table 2**  
**Post-Test Performance of Grade 11 Students**

Score Range	Description	PRETEST	
		Frequency	%
25-30	Excellent	40	100
19-24	Very Good	0	0
13-18	Good	0	0
7-12	Fair	0	0
1-6	Poor	0	0
Total		40	100
<b>Weighted Mean</b>		<b>28.80</b>	<b>Excellent</b>

Table 2 presents the performance of the Grade 11 Senior High School students in Introduction to World Religion and Belief System after the utilization of teacher-initiated questions to enhance their critical thinking skills. It was revealed on the table that among the 40 Grade 11 Senior High School students, all of them or 100% got a score of 25-30 which is excellent. Moreover, it was shown on the table that the performance of Grade 11 Senior High School students in Introduction to World Religion and Belief System after the utilization of teacher-initiated questions to enhance their critical thinking skills got a weighted mean of 28.80 which is interpreted as excellent. This means that the teacher-initiated questions thrown to the Grade 11 Senior High



School students is effective in developing and enhancing critical thinking skills. This implies that the art of questioning teachers during the teaching-learning process is essential and stimulates students' critical thinking skills. Good critical thinking skills can help students fight the moral decadence that afflicts society, especially the younger generation, who have a high level of urge and curiosity. Hence, the younger generation needs to be equipped with skills that will enable them to survive and wisely adapt to the challenges of the 21st century (Apsari, 2016; Feng, 2013; Gelder, 2005; Paul & Elder, 2008; Sugiyarti, Arif, & Mursalin, 2018; Zubaidah, 2016). One of the means to provide these skills is through education. Education is a proven conscious effort in developing human potential, and to provide opportunities to explore the environment and natural surroundings. While a child explores the environment, it collects a variety of useful information. The more information a child collects, the better the child's skills are. One of the skills that can be developed in early childhood through education or through learning is the ability to think critically. According to Costa and Kallick (2015), the strategic use of questions can deepen learning, build a growth mindset, and help students become more aware of their own thinking processes.

**Table 3**  
**Test of Difference Between the Scores in the Pre-Test and**  
**Post-Test Performances of Grade 11 Students**

Aspects	Test Scores		Computed T	Critical T	Decision	Interpretation
<b>GRADE 11 Learners</b>	Pre	16.75	2.355	1.921	Reject H <sub>0</sub>	Significant
	Post	28.80				

Table 3 test of difference in the performances of Grade 11 Senior High School students in Introduction to World Religion and Belief System before and after the utilization of teacher-initiated questions in teaching. It was revealed on the table that the pre-test performance of 16.75 has increased to 28.80 after the utilization of teacher-initiated questions which resulted to 2.355 computed value or t which is greater than the critical value of 1.921, so null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant difference in the performances of Grade 11 Senior High School students in Introduction to World Religion and Belief System before and after the utilization of teacher-initiated questions in teaching. This implies that the teacher-initiated question utilized by the teacher in teaching Introduction to World Religion and Belief System is effective in enhancing the critical thinking skills of the Grade 11 Senior High School students. The ability to ask questions also leads to the creation of new ideas, new inventions, and better solutions (Ritchhart, 2012; Rothstein & Santana, 2017). Additionally, questions challenge students to reflect on their theories and take different perspectives. Formulating good questions benefits teachers and children in the co-construction of knowledge and the development of a theory of mind. Theory of

mind is a social-cognitive skill that involves the ability to explain and predict other people's behavior almost as if we had read their minds (Gallager & Frith, 2003). According to Costa and Kallick (2015), questions are the gateway into students' thinking; to them, masterful teachers not only ask many questions, but they also purposefully design and pose questions that are appropriate for each learning goal. Thus, teachers promote critical thinking by using intentional questions so that the children will better understand concepts and act intelligently. Skilled questioning is related to intention (more about this given in the questioning and intentional teaching section). Paul & Elder (2014) point out that students who understand how to look over and critique ideas can make connections among disciplines and see knowledge as useful as applicable to their daily life. Therefore, every teacher must look for exciting ways to promote students' critical thinking skills in the classroom. Based on these studies, it is proven that good questioning skills in teachers contribute to the development of critical thinking skills in students (Cojocariu & Butnaru, 2014; Corley & Rauscher, 2013; Nappi, 2017; Paul & Elder, 2008).

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The study revealed a significant difference in the performances of Grade 11 Senior High School students in Introduction to World Religion and Belief System before and after the utilization of teacher-initiated questions in teaching. The art of questioning of teachers during the teaching-learning process through the teacher-initiated questions which helps students to evaluate, judge, analyze and synthesized the information on a given situation had helped in enhancing the critical thinking skills of Grade 11 Senior High School students. Thus, making the intervention an effective teaching strategy in enhancing the critical thinking skills, hence, improving their performance in the subject.

#### **V. Recommendations**

1. Utilize the proposed improvement plan formulated.
2. Teachers must be equipped with knowledge on the development of the art of questioning during the delivery of the lesson.
3. The Department of Education may fully support the continuing professional development of teachers, especially on developing higher order thinking skills questions.
4. Conduct training on the development of the art of questioning in teaching.
5. Teachers must spend extra time equipping themselves on the new trends, strategies and approaches in teaching which will encourage and motivate students to enhance their critical thinking skills.
6. Teachers must be knowledgeable in providing learning support materials to the students from the teacher-initiated questions used in teaching.



7. School Heads must include in the Annual Implementation Plan professional development activities which stimulates and enhance teachers in the delivery of the lesson most especially in the development of higher order thinking skills, and
8. Future researchers should replicate this study to include different locales and include different variables aside from the mentioned in this study.

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#### AUTHOR'S PROFILE



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The author is Mr. Jesse Dan O. Quitilig. He was born on January 8, 1988, at Catbalogan, Samar. He is the youngest child of Mr. Manuel S. Quitilig and Mrs. Lilibeth O. Quitilig and brother to Marjorie Hostler, *nee* Quitilig. He is married to Mrs. Mary Ghembee Quitilig, *nee* Reforzado and the father of Gianna Felice R. Quitilig. He is currently residing at Barangay Linao, Ormoc City. He finished his elementary education at Ormoc Se San School in the year 2000. He continued his secondary education at New Ormoc City National High School in 2004. Though having a rough start in the college journey, he was able to achieve his degree in Bachelor of Science in Criminology at Holy Spirit Foundation in Tacloban City. Hoping for further learning, he took up units in Bachelor in Secondary Education Major in Social Studies in Western Leyte College of Ormoc City where he also started his teaching career. He took up Master of Arts in Education major in Supervision and Administration and finished his course with complete academic requirements at Western Leyte College of Ormoc City, Inc.

After He graduated her bachelor's degree, He was teaching for five (5) years in the High School Department of Western Leyte College where he handled multiple year levels including Senior High. In 2018, he was hired included in the Ormoc City Division workforce wherein he teaches Introduction to World Religion and Belief Systems, Empowerment Technologies, and Media and Information Literacy.