

According to Beyer (1997), the most important goal of schooling is learning and learning is a consequence of thinking. Students' success in school is heavily dependent on their inclination as well as their ability to think skillfully. Promoting critical thinking skills in learners has attracted the attention of educators but little consideration is given to how teachers should be trained to promote it in schools. Educational planners, especially in African countries including Ghana have given little thought to how teacher training institutions should prepare pre-service teachers to enhance students' critical thinking skills (Acheampong, 2001; Hill, 2000). Improving the quality of students' thinking in schools requires skillful teaching. Such a skill does not emerge without preparation. The challenge to pre-service teacher institutions in Ghana therefore, is to pursue training programs that prepare pre-service teachers to develop their students' critical thinking skills. Pre-service teachers need to be prepared to teach their students to think critically but teacher preparation in Ghana is devoid of the application of activities or strategies that develop the thinking skills of student-teachers (Ghana Education service/Teacher Education Division/Overseas Development Agency, 1993). Though there has been a plethora of studies on the negative effects of poor teaching strategies and classroom environment on students' thinking, it is essential to investigate this phenomenon in a particular context and setting to serve the local professionals. It is significant to investigate such a problem in a setting where there are lack of teachers, where there are lack of textbooks and technology, where there are large class sizes, a setting where the academically "weak" are recruited for training and in a setting where the culture of the society bestows on the teacher absolute powers in the classroom. There is therefore, the need to investigate the present state of affairs in Ghanaian teacher institutions and what can be done to promote better thinking.

#### Method

The study sought to answer these questions: How do the teaching strategies employed by Ghanaian initial teacher educators and the classroom ecology they create affects the thinking skills of pre-service teachers? And what can be done to improve pre-service teachers' thinking through teaching methods and classroom ecology? The study employed a qualitative case study approach to investigate the

problem at Akatkyiman Teacher Training College (a pseudonym) in Ghana. Teachers in science, mathematics and social studies and students were interviewed and observed.