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Establishing Institutional Repositories as Catalyst to Advance Research Output in Academic Institutions

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the establishment of Institutional Repositories in academic institutions in Ghana to enhance research output. A mixed-methods approach was used to gather data through questionnaires and interviews from the topmost Ghana's Colleges of Education. Using stratified random sampling technique 365 respondents, comprising administrators, lecturers, and librarians were selected for the study. The study aimed to assess the awareness, expertise, and challenges associated with Institutional Repository creation in academic institutions. The findings revealed that while there was a general awareness of Institutional Repository, funding and technical expertise were major obstacles. The results aligned with previous research, emphasizing the importance of human and financial resources for Institutional Repository success. Managers in Ghana's academic institutions would find the results useful to prioritize Institutional Repository awareness campaigns. Higher education policymakers and stakeholders in Ghana would make Institutional Repositories a national policy and provide adequate training and funding to support implementation of Institutional Repositories.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Institutional Repositories (IRs) have become essential in academia and research (Dzandza, 2020; Gajbhiye, 2025). An institutional repository (IR) serves as a digital hub for storing, safeguarding, and sharing the valuable intellectual contributions of an academic institution. These contributions often encompass research papers, dissertations, theses, and other scholarly works. This definition highlights the importance of IRs in preserving and sharing academic research. Globally, IRs provide a platform for preserving, organising, and sharing scholarly work (Ndegwa, Bosire & Odero, 2022; Rothfritz et al., 2026). IRs are tools that support open access and the widespread availability of academic work, particularly in the African context, emphasizing their significance in improving the discoverability and availability of research (Adam & Kaur, 2022; Dr. Govind S. Ghogare et al., 2025). Their definition emphasises the significance of IRs in improving the discoverability and availability of research. IRs play a significant role in scholarly communication, contributing to open-access initiatives and promoting the sharing of knowledge among members of the academic community.The idea of IRs is quite intricate, with multiple components that revolve around preservation, accessibility, and scholarly communication (Santos-Hermosa, 2023; Asadi et al., 2019). IRs have a dual purpose of preserving the intellectual output of institutions and promoting open access to scholarly materials. IRs play a crucial role in preserving academic content and facilitating the sharing of knowledge, making knowledge more accessible to everyone (Dlamini & Snyman, 2017; Mthembu & Mbatha, 2022).

The widespread adoption of IRs has transformed the way academic institutions handle and distribute their research output, guaranteeing easier access and wider exposure to research (Osman & Nampombe, 2024; Linnaeus University et al., 2020). These repositories play a crucial role in removing obstacles to knowledge transmission, thereby promoting inclusivity. This is particularly important in the current information-dominated culture.Additionally, IRs help preserve digital content, which is essential to preserving the integrity and longevity of scholarly work (Islam Munshi, Islam, & Hossain, 2020; Marsh et al., 2017).

The concept of research output is complex and has been described in different ways in academic literatureResearch output is defined as the complete body of published work generated by researchers during a given period, emphasizing both the quantity and quality aspects (Azmeh, 2022; Demetres et al., 2020). Delves deeper into this topic by highlighting the significance of research output in enhancing social capital (Carradore, 2022; Somanagouda Shankargouda Patil et al., 2025) . Social capital refers to the tangible impact of academic work on knowledge and societyResearch output is discussed as the collective body of work that can be evaluated using productivity metrics such as publication counts, citation indices, and influence on policy and practice (Stock et al., 2023; Dube, 2025). The definitions together highlight the intricate nature of academic research output, which goes beyond just the quantity of publications and encompasses the importance and impact of the conducted research.

The examination of research output is essential for understanding the larger influence of academic activity on society and the economy. Although much emphasis is placed on the amount of research produced, particularly in relation to academic rankings and funding, it is the calibre of the work that truly makes valuable contributions to knowledge and policy development. Research output in technologically laggard contexts can have a significant impact on economic growth depending on whether it is basic or applied, implying that a mere

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increase in the quantity of academic research without considering its relevance and practicality may not result in tangible benefits for society (Pinto & Teixeira, 2024; Meena, 2024).

In addition, emphasise the significance of making research output accessible (Huang et al., 2024; Kapiszewski & Karcher, 2020) . They point out that open access publications tend to receive a wider range of citations, which expands their influence beyond the confines of traditional academia. This observation is consistent with findings that establish the important role of research and development (R&D) in promoting sustainable innovation systems (Sarpong et al., 2023; Shejule, 2024). These studies indicate that for research to have a significant societal impact, it should not only be abundant but also focused on getting support from institutions, the presence of technological infrastructure, and the willingness of academic staff to contribute their work to the repositories.

In Africa, the progress of IRs has been both encouraging and demanding. Countries such as Nigeria and Kenya have made substantial progress in establishing IRs in their universities, resulting in enhanced research visibility and academic collaboration (Anene, Ozor, & Baro, 2020; Jelagat, Odini, & Wamukoya, 2021). Nonetheless, there have been challenges in the way of Africa's broad adoption of IR. According to Dlamini & Snyman (2017) limited finance, lack of technical skills, and poor infrastructure have hampered many African institutions' ability to fully realise their IR potential. Notwithstanding these obstacles, there is a growing understanding of the value of IRs in raising the calibre of research produced by African universities, and a number of these institutions are actively working to find ways to get over these obstacles (Mwalubanda, 2021; Shenton, 2022).

In Ghana, the need to develop IRs in Colleges of Education (CoEs) is becoming more apparent (Kodua-Ntim, 2021; Huang et al., 2023). Historically, these colleges have played an important role in teacher education, progressing from Post-Secondary Teacher Training Colleges to full-fledged Colleges of Education with university education mandates. The transformation of CoEs into tertiary institutions was solidified through the implementation of the Colleges of Education (Act 2012, Act 847). This act highlighted the importance of research in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning (Kodua-Ntim, 2021; Ebrahim & Bong, 2019). Nevertheless, the lack of IRs in CoEs creates a notable void, which hinders these institutions from fully engaging with the global scholarly community and to maximise their research output.

Given the growing demand for high-quality education and the incorporation of research into teacher education, establishing IRs at CoEs in Ghana is not only feasible but also necessary (Osman & Nampombe, 2024; Joshi, 2024). Faculty and students use IRs as a forum to share their research output, raising the profile of their contributions and adding to the international academic conversation (Santos-Hermosa, 2023; Kodua-Ntim & Fombad, 2020). In addition, the advancement of IRs is in line with the overall goals of improving research output and institutional reputation, which are crucial for the success and longevity of CoEs as academic institutions. By adopting IRs, CoEs in Ghana can enhance their research output, promote academic collaboration, and maintain their relevance in the constantly changing education landscape.

Although past research has focused on the advantages and difficulties of Institutional Repositories (IRs) in African universities (Dlamini & Snyman, 2017; Anene, Ozor & Baro, 2020). However, there has been limited exploration of colleges of Education (CoEs) in Ghana. This study aims to fill a void by examining the possibility of creating IRs at specific CoEs, which would improve research output and benefit the wider academic community.To this end, this

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study sought to investigate the establishment of IRs as a catalyst to advance research output in CoEs. Specifically, the study sought to find out the level of awareness of IRs among the staff, examine the feasibility of establishing IRs and to identify the benefits of IRs to the Colleges of Education in Ghana.

2. METHODS

This study adopted multiple case study design to investigate and explain intricate phenomena across different cases to improve understanding through comparisons. Being a component of a larger study, an inclusive research method was utilised, incorporating both numerical and descriptive approaches to ensure a thorough gathering of data. By employing both methods, a more comprehensive analysis was achieved, as relying on a single approach would not have sufficed to capture the intricacies of the data. This method offered more comprehensive results derived from both the interviews and questionnaires.

A numerous case study was done to determine the feasibility of establishing Institutional Repositories (IRs) in Ghana's six Colleges of Education (CoEs). The colleges chosen from various regions were; Accra College of Education (ACCE), Bagabaga College of Education (BACE), Berekum College of Education (BECOLED), Holy Child College of Education (HCCE), Jasikan College of Education (JASICO), and Wesley College of Education (WESCO). Because of its size, two colleges were chosen from the Ashanti/Brong Ahafo zone, assuring participation from all 46 public co-educational institutions in Ghana. The selection of the participants was based on their crucial roles in establishing institutional repositories (IRs). The participants consisted of academic professionals such as principals, vice-principals, librarians, finance officers, and lecturers, who played a crucial role in the formation of IR. The study included a total of 365 individuals, consisting of 27 members in management, five librarians, three ICT officers, six quality assurance officers, and 324 lecturers/tutors. It was observed that certain institutions were missing crucial staff members, like internal auditors and ICT officers. The inclusive involvement of these stakeholders aimed to guarantee comprehensive representation and efficient evaluation of IR feasibility across the chosen CoEs.

2.1. Table

Table 1. Overview of total respondents

RESPONDENTS COLLEGES	ACCE	BACE	BECOLED	HCCE	JASICO	WESCO	TOTAL
Management members	4	5	5	4	4	1	27
Head librarians	1	1	1	1	-	1	5
ICT officers	-	1	1	-	-	1	3
Quality Assurance officers	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
lecturers/Tutors	40	70	66	37	41	70	324
Total	46	78	74	43	47	77	365

Source: Field data, 2024

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Questionnaires were created to align with the study's objectives and were distributed online using Google Forms. This approach facilitated effective data gathering across various locations, enabling respondents to provide both open and closed-ended answers. Key personnel from six selected Colleges of Education (CoEs), including librarians, principals, and ICT officers, were interviewed in a semi-structured format. This approach offered a comprehensive analysis of qualitative data to enhance the questionnaire responses. The interviews were also structured to align with the study's main objectives, while also providing room to delve deeper into participants' responses. The use of these tools allowed for the gathering of both numerical and descriptive information necessary for the research.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Data Presentation

The descriptive statistics were employed for the data presentation and analysis. The results were presented in a straightforward manner using percentages, tables, and graphs. Google Sheets made this process easier by providing tools for collecting, analysing, and organising data. Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the interview data and identify patterns. Participants were assigned identification codes (e.g., P1, P2, P2…) to ensure their anonymity.

Interviews were conducted with college secretaries, librarians, finance officers, internal auditors, ICT officers, and quality assurance officers. A total of 13 interviews were completed, with 4 conducted face-to-face and 9 conducted via telephone. The response rate of 88.3% was deemed adequate. Interviews were carefully coded to safeguard the identities of participants, guaranteeing their confidentiality and staying in line with the goals of the study. The analysis explored various aspects of Institutional Repositories (IR), including awareness, feasibility, impact, and benefits of IR.

Background information of the respondents

The respondents from the six (6) selected CoEs were asked to indicate their college, gender, as well as designation and years of service.

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3.2. Table

Table 2. Demographic distribution of respondents

Category	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Colleges	WESCO	66	23.1
	BACE	64	22.3
	BECOLED	59	20.6
	ACCE	35	12.2
	JASICO	34	11.9
	HCCE	28	9.8
Gender	Male	230	80.4
	Female	56	19.5
Years of Service	1-5 years	178	62.2
	6-10 years	47	16.4
	11-15 years	33	11.5
	More than 15 years	28	9.8
Interview Participants (Gender)	Male	8	N/A
	Female	5	N/A
Interview Participants (Years Served)	1-5 years	7	N/A
	5-10 years	6	N/A

Source: Field data, 2024

Table 2 showed that WESCO had the most respondents (66, 23.1%), followed by BACE (64, 22.3%), and BECOLED (59, 20.6%). ACCE, JASICO, and HCCE had a smaller number of respondents, with HCCE having the lowest percentage (28, 9.8%). The majority of respondents were male (80.4%), while a smaller percentage were female (19.5%), suggesting an uneven distribution between genders. The majority of participants (62.2%) had between 1-5 years of experience, while a smaller percentage had 6-10 years (16.4%), 11-15 years (11.5%), or over 15 years (9.8%). The interview sample displayed a clear majority of males and individuals with comparable levels of experience.

3.3 Level of awareness

The study aimed to evaluate the knowledge levels of participants in Colleges of Education (CoEs) regarding IRs. The study found that a majority of respondents had some level of awareness of IRs, with a significant portion having full awareness. However, a small percentage of respondents had no awareness of IRs. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research, which found high levels of awareness among scholars in different settings (Tiemo & Ebiagbe, 2016; P. R. Talekar, 2024). The study suggests that having a good understanding greatly affects the likelihood of creating IRs, which can have a beneficial effect on academic careers and visibility. The lack of awareness observed may be due to a disparity in local comprehension when compared to the more established information retrieval systems found in developed regions.

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There was a general observation among the 13 interviewees at the interview session that there was no better and deeper understanding of what an IR was about. Some had not even heard about it at all. This is how P3 expressed the awareness level of IR:
P3: "I just heard it…"
Although many interviewees had limited knowledge about the topic, a few had unintentionally utilised IRs in their academic pursuits.
This is P4 remarked:
P4: "I used the institutional repository to access journals and other resources during my MSc. Program but never knew I was making use of that database…"

3.4 Means of awareness

The study sought to explore the ways in which individuals became familiar with institutional repositories (IRs). The primary means of gaining knowledge were post-graduate study (24.3%), university websites (21.3%), orientation (20.4%), self-discovery (20.2%), word of mouth (11.7%), Google search (1.3%), and workshops (0.7%). These findings are consistent with previous research, which emphasised the importance of post-graduate study in gaining knowledge about IRs (Gorceag, 2025; Gurikar, 2026).

Interviews revealed that individuals who had knowledge of IRs often came across them while pursuing their higher education. Interviewees' comments confirmed the findings, highlighting how they used IRs to access journals, theses, and other resources throughout their academic programmes.
P1: "I used the institutional repository to access journals and other resources during my MSc. Program but never knew I was making use of that database…"
P2: "During my MBA study, I accessed various resources from an institutional repository…"
P3: "All the universities I know, I have accessed my thesis from their repositories…"
P8: "I have accessed journals, thesis, and dissertations from the databases of universities…"
P11: "I have accessed materials from the institutional repository before at the University of Ghana…" The study's findings align with previous research, suggesting that the majority of universities in Ghana have implemented Institutional Repositories (IRs), which is in line with the experiences reported by the respondents.

3.5 Accessed materials from IR

Participants were enquired about the resources they utilised from IRs throughout their advanced studies. The research revealed that a significant portion of the responses, specifically 35.2%, were dedicated to scholarly articles, while 28.4% were focused on theses and dissertations. The findings highlight the importance of journal articles, theses, and dissertations in African repositories, aligning with previous studies that show scholars often rely on these resources to fulfil their academic requirements (Mabutho, 2025; Mnzava & Mangare, 2023).

The interview session revealed very little information about the kind of materials accessed by respondents. An interviewee mentioned the availability of these resources through university databases. P8 only response was;
P8: "I have accessed journals, thesis, and dissertations from the databases of universities…"

The research findings suggest that academic papers and dissertations play a vital role in enhancing students' learning experience, especially if educational institutions establish repositories to store and share these valuable resources.

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3.6 Feasibility of establishing IRs in the CoEs in Ghana

The study was to evaluate the possibility of implementing institutional repositories (IRs) in Ghana's Colleges of Education (CoEs). The survey findings indicate a significant likelihood of 67.8%, in contrast to a lower possibility of 32.2%. The interviews conducted and the views expressed by most of the respondents showed that the establishment of IRs in the CoEs could highly be a reality. These findings are consistent with academic studies conducted This finding demonstrates the positive reception of IR development in South Africa and Ghana (Chilimo, 2016; Gurikar, 2026). The study reinforces previous academic research emphasizing the effective implementation of IRs at prestigious institutions such as Kwame Nkrumah University and the University of Ghana (Martin-Yeboah, 2016; Kumah & Filson, 2022). The high feasibility indicated is dependent on the colleges' dedication, financial backing, and technical assistance. As educational institutions transition from offering diplomas to awarding degrees, the establishment of Institutional Repositories (IRs) becomes more attainable, thanks to the expected assistance from staff members.

The outcome of the interview suggested that, except for few interviewees who were of the view that the establishment of IR is not feasible, the majority of them stated that the creation of IR was highly feasible.

For instance, P10 stated that, “the possibility of establishing it is very high but it will take time. Some other universities have those things but the colleges don’t, with time we are going to have that…”

P11 also stated that, “the possibility is very high due to facilities such as Wi-Fi, and the availability of staff such as the librarian, ICT staff and the management…”

Some of the participants gave reasons such as,

P13: “there are enough buildings and other project works ongoing to support the creation of IR. Additionally, the college council and the management have the required competence to pull resources together…”

P12: “The College now records lecture notes, stores them, and makes them available to students. Furthermore, the institution has ICT tools and equipment that will make such an establishment possible. There are also materials and human resources…”

Those who said it was not feasible to be established gave reasons such as management's lack of commitment to provide resources for its establishment.

In the words of P7, “attitude of management towards spending money on knowledge resources is very poor so I do not believe that they will be interested in committing so much money in establishing it…”

Another respondent (P9) also asserted that,

“There is no managerial urge to push it. Also, the college system does not encourage new knowledge and will therefore invest in other things and not a repository. Finally, the investment in ICT in the college is not encouraging…”

3.7 Resources needed for the establishment of IRs

The study showed that infrastructure is a key factor in the establishment of institutional repositories (IRs), with 117 responses (38.5%) emphasising its importance. Previous studies have identified various obstacles related to technology, broadband, telecommunications, and high costs (Joshi, 2024b; Shenton, 2022). Interviews revealed that despite the limited current infrastructure, colleges are determined to overcome these challenges. Interviewees observed that the current infrastructure is insufficient, but they

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expressed confidence that it will be resolved when implementing IRs. To possess the right infrastructure is crucial for successful implementation of IR in every institution.

The respondents confirmed the importance of infrastructure, with different views on the sufficiency of existing resources, skilled personnel, and funding for establishing IRs:

P4: "We have librarians and ICT officers but I do not think that their number is enough for the establishment of an institutional repository…"

P8: "for funds, they are always available, just that the pressure on it is so much that sometimes the important issues are ignored if care is not taken…"

P9: "I believe that seeking financial support from other bodies and institutions would be the best option since the establishment of something like the institutional repository will demand a lot of financial support…"

P10: "Infrastructure, for now, is inadequate, but with time those that need to be made available when the time is due will be made available…"

P11: "Infrastructure and technology, yes. That is whenever we are ready for the formation of an institutional repository…"

P13: "I think the college has to work on the infrastructural support before adopting an institutional repository…"

Specific involvement of staff and other officers in the establishment of an IR. The study found that a majority of respondents believe that it is important to educate all staff members about the IR in order to ensure its success. Interviews emphasised the importance of involving all staff members in preparation for the IR. Interviewees noted that when everyone is involved, it leads to better work and less resistance. The findings support previous research highlighting the need for comprehensive awareness strategies for IR adoption (Kodua-Ntim & Fombad, 2020; Kumah Adzadi, & Imoro, 2019). The importance of awareness among all stakeholders for successful IR implementation has also been emphasised (Gurikar, 2026; Jayakanth, 2023). Some of the interviewees' responses:

In the words of P5, "the involvement of staff is very key because that will push them to even do good work".

Another, P6, remarked that, "Oh, every staff member must be involved because using myself as an example, if no one involves me I will be adamant…"

P7 also said that, "this is a responsibility that should be left in the hands of colleagues whose expertise is in that area…"

Measures that must be in place to ensure that IRs are established in CoEs in Ghana. The study identified important factors for the effective implementation of institutional repositories (IRs) in Colleges of Education (CoEs). These factors include promoting and raising awareness about the services, developing and training the staff, providing necessary resources, and conducting pilot projects. The majority of respondents, 33.6% to be exact, emphasised the significance of promotion and awareness services. It is evident that Elia (2019) research highlights the crucial role of effective information literacy programmes. All four measures are essential, as no single college stood out in any measure. This indicates the importance of considering all aspects when evaluating academic institutions. BECOLED is currently focusing on promotion and awareness, JASICO is providing staffing and resource support, and ACCE is involved in pilot projects. Interviewees unanimously recognised the significance of these measures, in contrast to previous findings that stakeholder commitment is frequently absent (Marsh et al., 2017; Meena, 2024).

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Hence, interviewees agreed that promotion and awareness services, staffing and human resource development, resource support and provision, and Pilot project should be adopted as part of the preparatory measures for the formation of IR.

P7 remarked that, "we need to embark on awareness, and then train the personnel who will be in charge…"

P9 also had this to say; "I would require that the right resources are provided, since that will prepare the grounds well, and then we embark upon serious awareness creation…"

P13 was of the view that, "the colleges should begin with a pilot project, where selected colleges can start and then later be extended to the rest of the colleges. Before this is done, promotion and awareness must be done, staff and human resource development must be done, and resources provided. When all these things are done and the benefits begin to come, the institutional repository will be accepted by all…"

3.8 Benefits of IRs

The acceptance and potential establishment of institutional repositories (IRs) is heavily influenced by the perceived benefits they offer. The study revealed that 29.2% of participants considered the advantages to staff members as the most noteworthy, supporting previous perspectives on the benefits of open access institutional repositories for researchers and educators (Kumah et al., 2020; Librarian K.J. Somaiya College Kopargaon (SPPU) & Bhausaheb, 2025). Additional advantages were observed for the college (26.5%), academia (18.2%), individual respondents (16.7%), and the country (9.5%). This reinforces the assertions made by Nicholas & Rowlands (2005) regarding the extensive advantages of IRs. Interviews revealed that participants acknowledged the importance of IRs in improving research visibility, institutional image, and global access to resources. The majority of the responses from the interviewees were that IR has a lot of benefits. Below are some of the specific comments made by some of the interviewees.

P1: "I remember I accessed an IR during my MBA study, but never knew it was an IR. It is very good for research work…"

P3: "During my MSc. programme, I accessed journals and other resources from which I realized that studies done by people of different countries can be seen all over the world through that medium. This means that IR makes the work of people or scholars seen worldwide…"

P7: "IR has a lot of benefits such as boosting the image of the institution as a tertiary institution and also making resources owned by the college available electronically and globally…"

4. CONCLUSION

Creating institutional repositories (IRs) in Colleges of Education (CoEs) is essential for increasing worldwide recognition and academic influence. Academic literature emphasises the advantages of IRs, such as enhancing the global recognition of scholars and institutions. South Africa's advancements in IR development are setting a positive example for the rest of Africa. Similarly, Ghana's public universities have also made impressive progress in this field. Given the strong academic foundation and extensive resources available at CoEs, the establishment of IRs is highly feasible. Despite the difficulties involved, there is an increasing recognition that can aid in the establishment of IR. It is crucial for educational institutions and those involved to adopt the appropriate strategies to embrace this innovation and enhance their academic achievements.

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While a majority of respondents know IRs, there are still some who lack awareness. It is important to start a comprehensive awareness campaign among stakeholders. Establishing IRs should be mandatory as a national policy. This policy would guarantee that all parties, such as librarians, tutors, lecturers, administrators, etc. involved are fully committed to the establishment of the IR. An effective awareness campaign is necessary to fully realise the benefits of IR and to encourage staff participation. Management of CoEs should secure funding from the central government, corporate organizations, and other sources for the success of IR initiatives.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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