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ASSESSING MEDIA LITERACY SKILLS AMONG ACADEMIC STAFF IN PUBLIC COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING NATION

Dr. Godwin Nwachukwu Arua

Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu, Nigeria

Assoc. Prof. Shamila Mohamed Shuhidan[2]

School of Information Science, College of Computing, Informatics and Mathematics, Universiti Teknologi MARA

and

Dr. Haslinda Husaini

School of Information Science, College of Computing, Informatics and Mathematics, Universiti Teknologi MARA

Abstract

In this digital era, individuals must acquire the skills, information, and attitudes necessary for the workforce and society in the twenty-first century. These attributes are acknowledged by academics, instructors, corporate leaders, and government initiatives as essential for achieving success in the 21st century. Academicians require a distinct combination of abilities, specialized knowledge, and mental resilience to do research, educate, and support the community. Although there are advantages to incorporating technology in education, research has shown that academic faculty still lack proficiency in media literacy (ML). This study assessed the ML proficiency of academic staff members at public education colleges in Nigeria as a developing nation, with reference to southeast geopolitical zone. The research utilized a quantitative methodology and involved academic personnel from public institutes of education in Southeast Nigeria who were surveyed both offline and online. 725 questionnaire respondents were selected using purposive sampling. Version 28 of SPSS was used in data analysis. The descriptive findings demonstrated a high degree of information literacy and media

literacy. The study recommends that management of institutions should keep a close eye on their academic staff of ML Skills to maximize each person's productivity. Future studies could investigate the correlation between IL and ML skills with other higher education categories in the nation to support the UNESCO 2030 agenda to provide Quality Education.

Keywords: Media Literacy, Media Literacy Skills, Assessment, Academic Staff, College of Education, Nigeria.

Introduction

Media literacy (ML) refers to the skills, knowledge, and understanding that empower individuals to utilize media securely and effectively. It is the capacity to access, comprehend, and generate messages in different situations. Ciurel (2016) proposed a practical definition of media literacy (ML) as a set of interconnected capabilities that empower individuals to actively engage with, evaluate, understand, and question media messages. It involves each person's ability to effectively communicate through media. All media are subject to media literacy. To make knowledge available to the public via the press, the Internet, recorded music, radio, television, and other digital communication media. It is crucial to understand that the media in question encompasses more than just different formats. Media refers to various types of communication, such as broadcast news, journalism, theatre, movies, and more recently, social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and similar platforms. New abilities are required, especially in evaluation. Important media-related concerns include how people choose which news sources to believe, how to evaluate the positions of various candidates, how to cast their ballots, and how to engage with the community.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) rely on media literacy as a crucial ability that is essential for lifelong learning (Latifah et al., 2019; Liu & Zhang, 2021). People

could acquire knowledge and improve their critical thinking skills by developing their media competencies (Chan et al., 2017; Churchill, 2020). Media literacy is a competency-based approach that seek to promote critical thinking and are necessary in today's knowledge society and help to raise the quality of education (Bintoro & Winarsih, 2022). A change that needs to be made in education is to provide young individuals with the tools they need to acquire essential knowledge and skills and become lifelong learners. For students and lecturers in HEIs to make meaningful choices in life—at work, in the classroom, and in society—and to grasp every chance and obstacle that comes up, meaningful education content must incorporate the media literacy skills needed to sustain themselves (Bintoro & Winarsih, 2022, citing UNESCO, 2008).

Statement of Problem.

People need to improve their media literacy skills throughout their careers and acclimate to the dynamic information environment due to the growth of the knowledge economy. Low media literacy has an impact on lifelong learning (Emisiko & Severina, 2018). The media is an essential component of daily communication and is now viewed as a time and lifestyle requirement for which students are being prepared by educational systems. Media literacy is the ability to obtain, analyze, and evaluate information from different media channels. It encompasses skills like critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving. Finding trustworthy and accurate data requires the capacity to navigate the abundance of available information in libraries and online, which is why it is becoming increasingly crucial. Researchers have discovered that many academic staff are either illiterate or lack basic information literacy skills,

preventing them from using Internet resources for their work (Ahmed & Yesmin, 2019; Niwaz et al., 2020).

Academic staff with media literacy skills can access, analyze, and assess a wide range of information sources, and communicate vital messages. These are essential for the academician to function effectively. Nevertheless, there is a deficiency in this set of skills required for information inquiry and successful utilization in this digital age (Belay & Bramo, 2017; Oyedipe & Popoola, 2021). In Nigeria, university librarian serves as academic staff to teach and guide media literacy and information literacy to lecturers and students.

Research Question

Drawing on the specified goal, the subsequent research question was put forth to obtain data for the inquiry, specifically:

1) What is the level of media literacy possessed by academic staff of colleges of education in Southeast Nigeria with respect to determining the perceived level of analysis of media content, the perceived level of assessment of media content, and the perceived level of communication of media messages?

Literature review.

Colleges of Education

Colleges of education in Nigeria are institutions established to train and produce qualified teachers for primary and secondary schools. These institutions have played a vital role in the development of the Nigerian educational system by producing quality

teachers who have contributed to the growth and development of the nation. (Al-amin,2023). The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) is responsible for ensuring that the colleges of education in Nigeria provide quality teacher education programs that meet the needs of the country. These colleges offer certificate, diploma, and degree programs in education and related fields. Many of the colleges have since been upgraded to degree-awarding institutions, and they have contributed significantly to the development of the education sector in Nigeria.

Academic staff members are individuals employed by educational institutions who contribute to the institution's core functions of teaching, research and or providing academic support. According to the Academic Calendar of the University of Manitoba (2023), "Academic Staff" includes all individuals primarily involved in instruction, research, or service/academic administration. They include faculty members who teach courses and conduct research, as well as various administrative and support staff who play roles in academic program management, student services and institutional administration. Academic staff collectively contribute to the academic and administrative well-being of the institution.

Media Literacy

To engage with modern society, people require information, abilities, and life skills to enable them to obtain, assess, and create media messages across a variety of platforms. Mallon (2018) and Suminas & Jastramskis (2020) referred it to as media literacy. Different organizations have been concerned with Media Literacy in a vast number of ways. Foundations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, OFCOM, and NAMLE are

among the major frontiers in advocating media literacy, others being different scholars and alike. An excessive amount of information is now available thanks to digital media technology, making it difficult for people to maintain a necessary distance from the materials they are constantly exposed to. Media literacy offers methods for methodically evaluating information disseminated through mass media outlets. However, media literacy also fosters critical thinking across a wide range of academic fields, giving people the tools needed to ensure the survival of democracy. It is essential to be dependable while creating a critical distance from messages spread by mass media. Beyond media analysis, nevertheless, media literacy education keeps people's capacity to carefully consider all available information before concluding intact by fostering critical thinking abilities. The ability to access, comprehend, and evaluate a broad range of media and media content elements, as well as to create communications in some contexts, is known as media literacy (ML). In the UNESCO Document, the following are the elements of media literacy:

(a) Understand the roles and objectives of the media.

(b) Acknowledge how the media carries out its mandate in certain situations.

(c) Examine and critically analyse media content.

(d) Media use for learning, intercultural communication, and democratic involvement.

(e) Create material that users have created.

Media literacy, as defined by the European Commission (2007) and referenced by Rasi et al. (2021), is the ability to utilize media, understand and evaluate different aspects of media and media environments, and produce communications in a variety of contexts. This explanation expands upon three essential components:

i. Media and content access.

ii. The capacity to critically analyze and comprehend media messages, and

iii. The ability to be creative, communicative, and productive.

The term "media literacy" describes the creative and instructive written, spoken, and visual content that is available in all forms of media, such as social media, video games, radio, television, and film. Digital literacy is included since "media literacy" includes all media (Rasi et al., 2021). According to Fedorov (2017), media literacy (ML) is the result of media education, that is, the ability to select, employ, perceive, create, evaluate, analyze, and distribute media texts (messages), as well as comprehend the political, sociocultural, and operational framework of the media.

Media literacy is a complex idea that includes moral, aesthetic, emotional, and cognitive development. According to Malan and Malan (2020), media literacy skills are made up of three building blocks: knowledge structure, skills, and personal locus. To construct solid knowledge structures, one employs their talents as tools to work on the information in media messages. Personal locus provides the motivation and guidance needed to complete the task. The purpose of the study is to assess the degree of media

literacy among academic employees at educational institutions. Media literacy is the ability to obtain, analyze, and evaluate information from different media channels. It encompasses skills like critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving. In this study, media literacy skill is defined as the ability of the academic staff to explore, understand, and evaluate media content in addition to communicating messages effectively in a range of settings. In today's world, individuals are obligated to possess media competence to avoid falling prey to various media manipulations and to fully engage with the diverse realm of media culture. Media literacy has become a crucial skill for an individual to survive in the modern digital environment. It is an effective technique for encouraging critical thinking and developing media consumers who actively engage with content. It is more crucial than ever to have media literacy skills. When exposed to digital media, media literacy strengthens critical thinking abilities, empowering people to make decisions on their own about content creation, access, assessment, and analysis.

Research methodology

One important thing to keep in mind while creating a survey questionnaire is to test it. Pre-testing has a direct impact on the questionnaire's quality and is a crucial phase (Taherdoost, 2022). Pre-testing is used to identify any problems with the questions, confusion in the inquiries or other hindrances to collecting information through a survey. The instrument was pre-tested to enhance the validity and content of the study. Pretesting is considered essential for developing survey questions and is also vital for enhancing data collecting in quality-of-life studies. (Dawadi, 2021).

After revising the questionnaire based on the recommendations provided by the expert evaluators, the researcher conducted the pilot study. Conducting a pilot study with possible participants is crucial once the survey's platforms, contents, and instruments have been determined. According to In (2017), preliminary investigation examines whether a certain task can be accomplished, whether it is worth pursuing, and if so, the appropriate approach to take. The five-Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" (coded as 1) to "strongly agree" (coded as 5), is employed in all parts. A sample of 39 academic staff members from Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe, Anambra State, and Federal College of Education, Eha–Amufu, Enugu State, Nigeria, were included in this study. The College was selected based on its convenient location for the researcher.

The respondents were asked to assess their answers using the Likert scale. The results of the pilot research were subjected to statistical analysis to ensure that no alterations to the instrument were necessary. Likewise, necessary changes were made and inquiries that did not add to data collection were eliminated.

A specific sample is used for research, and the findings are extrapolated to a broad or full target population. As stated by Shukla (2020), the term "population" in research denotes the entirety or categorization of all the entities to which the findings will be applicable. Sample size refers to the complete number of individuals selected from the research community. The researcher employed non-probability sampling approach. and purposive sampling. Purposeful sampling is a set of non-probability sampling procedures that select units based on specific features needed for the sample.

This study utilized a sample size calculator to determine the minimum sample size. Raosoft.com (2019), provides a 5% error margin and 95% confidence level. According to Raosoft's sample calculator, the recommended sample size is 344 academic staff from these colleges of education. Six geographical zones make up Nigeria: North-Central, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, South-South, and Southwest. Five states make up the Southeast region: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. The study's population consists of faculty members of education colleges in Nigeria's southeast region. There are four federal and five state schools of education that make up the Colleges of Education (COE) were utilized in this study. With a population of roughly 3200, the 9 COE got from Statistics of academic employees at Nigerian education colleges (Enwezor & Obi, 2022), of whom 344 academic employees will be the respondents in a representative sample, derived from Sample Size Calculator by Raosoft, Inc.

The survey for this research was published using the internet platform Google Forms. The survey link was opened to respondents from 17th July 2023 until 31st October 2023 (4 months). Respondents had the flexibility to participate at any point during the specified timeframe. The online forms have been submitted individually to the respondents through email. The following chapter presents the analysis's findings. The printed survey was also sent to the participants in areas with limited or insufficient network coverage with the help of colleagues. Both hard copy and online forms were used, along with an introduction, a cover letter, and a deadline for completing the questionnaire. To speed up the process of distributing and collecting the questionnaire, copies were given to the participants.

The research utilized a quantitative methodology and involved academic personnel from public colleges of education in Southeast Nigeria who were surveyed both offline and online. 725 questionnaire respondents were selected using purposeful sampling. Version 28 of SPSS was used for data analysis. Based on the data analysis and collection, the minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, and variance were noted. For each of the 20 dimensions, a 5-point Likert scale was adapted, where 1 is the lowest scale for strongly disagreeing and 5 is the highest for strongly agreeing. Media literacy was described by Erdem (2018) as the ability to locate, look through, evaluate, and share media content in a range of formats. Citing McAnulty, Bintoro anWinnarsih (2020) expressed that media literacy can assist in finding the information required in a timely, convenient, and appropriate manner. In this study, Media literacy is predicated on an individual's capacity to receive, process, assess, transmit, and produce texts and media in a variety of formats and genres. These days, one of the most crucial abilities is media literacy, according to Fedorov & Mikhaleva (2020).

Descriptive Analysis of Media Literacy Skills (MLS)

In measuring media literacy skills, four dimensions were used, namely i) to determine the level of access to media information, (ii) to determine the perceived level of analysis of media content, (iii) to determine the perceived level of assessment of media content, and (iv) to determine the perceived level of communication of media messages.

1. Perceived Level of Access to Media Information (ACS)

Access skills involve finding, utilizing, and delivering the relevant information using appropriate media methods (Hobbs, 2010; Ashley, 2017). The dimension of "access to media information" was measured using five items, and the average mean value was 4.368, as shown in the table below. The item "I can deliberately select different media devices depending on how they work (PC, smartphone, tablet, etc.)." yielded the highest mean value of 4.575 out of the five, while the item with the lowest mean value was 3.687. "I can use a range of search engines and databases to find the information I need."

Table 1.1

Descriptive Analysis for ACS

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
ACS1	I can efficiently obtain the information, music, images, or other required data via various media tools.	725	1.00	5.00	3.687	0.664	.803
		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
ACS2	I can obtain the information I require by using a variety of search engines and databases.	725	1.00	5.00	4.513	0.820	.673

ACS3	I am proficient in using technological media equipment, such as computers, interactive whiteboards, projectors, tablets, and cell phones	725	1.00	5.00	4.517	0.813	.662
ACS4	I can deliberately select different media devices depending on how they work (PC, smartphone, tablet, etc.).	725	1.00	5.00	4.575	0.740	.549
ACS5	I can use media devices and information sources on purpose (e.g., searching the Internet and social media sites for information).	725	1.00	5.00	4.548	0.759	.577
	Valid N (listwise)	**725**	**1.00**	**5.00**	**4.368**		

1. Strongly Disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. Neutral; 4. Agree; and 5. Strongly Agree

2. Perceived Level of Analysis of Media Content (ANS)

Analyze skills involve evaluating the composition, ideas, layout, style, and order of the message critically to determine the quality, veracity, and credibility (Hobbs, 2010). Analysis of media content was measured with five items. As illustrated in table below, the average mean value was 4.164. "I evaluate media content for the intended viewership, taking into account elements like selection options, customized online offers made possible by cookies, and the target audience for newspapers, television shows, and websites," has the lowest mean value at 3.910 among the five items. The highest mean value recorded is 4.392 for "I analyze media contents for the goals for which they were created and distributed."

Table 1.2

Descriptive Analysis for ANS

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
ANS1	I analyze media content for the goals for which they were created and distributed.	725	1.00	5.00	4.392	.0.980	.918
ANS2	I communicate messages using media technologies in addition to the clear goals and meaning that readers readily understand.	725	1.00	5.00	4.230	1.027	1.057
ANS3	I can interpret information from the media ((For instance, the structure of a text, article, movie, video, etc.) or implicit versus explicit media language	725	1.00	5.00	4.263	1.799	3.241
ANS4	I can create and disseminate media (e.g., news filtering, the interaction between politics, democracy, and the media, and from source to article)	725	1.00	5.00	4.025	0.932	.870

ANS5	I assess media material for the intended viewership, considering factors like selection options, customized online offers made possible by cookies, and the target audience for newspapers, television shows, and website	725	1.00	5.00	3.910	1.017	1.035
	Valid N (listwise)	**725**	**1.00**	**5.00**	**4.164**		

1. Strongly Disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. Neutral; 4. Agree; and 5. Strongly Agree

3. Perceived Level of Assessment of Media Content (ASS)

The process of evaluating media content for objectivity and reality and determining its value or calibre is known as "assessment skill" (Eristi & Erdem, 2018). Five items were used to test the evaluation of media material, and the average mean value is 4.2796, as shown in the table below. "I understand how the media shapes people's opinions and can have negative effects like hostility or addiction" had the greatest mean value (4.414) out of the five questions, and the lowest mean value (4.19) "I am conscious of the way I use media (copyright, unauthorized downloads, risky media usage, etc.)."

Table 1.3

Descriptive Analysis for ASS

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
ASS1	I can recognize harmful and cruel media content and take precautions to avoid it.	725	1.00	5.00	4.239	1.000	1.002
ASS2	I can evaluate and render a judgment on media messages or content considering ethical standards.	725	1.00	5.00	4.290	0.954	.910
ASS3	I can assess media content using a range of criteria (such as information quality, information comparability, and visual appeal).	725	1.00	5.00	4.265	0.911	.830
ASS4	I understand how the media shapes people's opinions and can have negative effects like hostility or addiction.	725	1.00	5.00	4.414	0.917	.842
ASS5	I am conscious of the way I use media (copyright, unauthorized downloads, risky media usage, etc.).	725	1.00	5.00	4.190	0.813	.663
	Valid N (listwise)	**725**	**1.00**	**5.00**	**4.2796**		

1. Strongly Disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. Neutral; 4. Agree; and 5. Strongly Agree

4. Perceived Level of Communication of Media Messages (CMS)

The ability to create media messages and spread them to others is a component of communication skills (Schmidt, 2013). Five items were used to measure media message communication, and the average mean value is 4.3324, as shown in the table 5.19. The highest mean value, 4.428, was recorded from the five items, for the item "I can assess the potential repercussions should I distribute messages containing fictitious and intentional information or pictures that are the property of others and must be shared with permission.“ The lowest mean value being 4.228 for the item "I may organize events like blogs, discussion forums, and digital campaigns to address a range of problems or increase public awareness of a particular topic using media tools and platforms."

Table 1.4

Descriptive Analysis of CMS

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
CMS1	I can assess the potential repercussions should I distribute messages containing fictitious and intentional information or pictures that are the property of others and must be shared with permission.	725	1.00	5.00	4.428	0.903	.817

CMS2	Using media tools and platforms, I may plan events like blogs, discussion forums, and digital campaigns to solve a variety of issues or raise awareness of a specific topic among the public.	725	1.00	5.00	4.228	0.967	.936
CMS3	I can produce media content, such as articles, photo or video documents, and blogs.	725	1.00	5.00	4.335	0.998	.997
CMS4	I can use media to convey and show information (e.g.,	725	1.00	5.00	4.366	0.967	.937
		N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Variance**
	organize and modify a presentation and broadcast media material via relevant channels like YouTube, blogs, and directories).						
CMS5	I can use the media to engage in public discourse (e.g., demonstrate commitment, utilizing social media, emailing companies, reader feedback, or other channels)	725	1.00	5.00	4.304	0.989	.980
	Valid N (listwise)	**725**	**1.00**	**5.00**	**4.3324**		

1. Strongly Disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. Neutral; 4. Agree; and 5. Strongly Agree

Discussion of Findings

The research aims to evaluate the degree of media literacy among academic staff members.

To identify the level of media literacy skills possessed by academic staff of colleges of education in Southeast Nigeria

The objective of the study is to identify the level of media literacy among academic employees was examined and Tables 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4 indicate that media literacy skills were higher: 4.368, for access to media content, 4.164 for analysis of media content, 4.2796 for assessing media content, and 4.3324 for communicating media messages. The finding shows that the academic staff possess the capacity to obtain, examine, and evaluate media content, and communicate media messages effectively. The results also demonstrate that academic staff members can participate and contribute towards the institution's objectives. This is consistent with Celebi & Copur (2019) study, which found a relationship between secondary school teachers' media literacy levels and their problem-solving skills. The researchers employed a quantitative correlational approach to examine the relationship across a wide range of variables. It was discovered that secondary school teachers have exceptional levels of problem-solving and media literacy

Recommendations

The findings about the level of media literacy skills possessed by academic staff present an interesting point for discussion. The following recommendations are proposed.

1. Media and Information Literacy Initiatives for Education Settings.

Developing a media and information literacy standard for Nigeria will equip Nigerians to overcome the limitations in the digital age and skill development. The Nigerian Federal Government, through the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS) and the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) should develop a media literacy standard for Nigerians will equip Nigerians to overcome the limitations in the digital age and skill development. This will help to equip the workforce with the necessary digital skills to meet the ever-changing demands of the job market, resulting in enhancing their capacity to critically evaluate news, information, and digital content. Efforts to enhance media literacy can involve hosting workshops and lectures on various topics such as internet safety, data privacy, digital media usage, and digital security. Management should incorporate this type of in-house professional development into the institution's mission. Ministries of Education, both at the state and federal levels, promote a mindset of inquisitiveness and continuous education. Faculty can gain proficiency in the use of technologies through workshops, training, and resources. Promoting digital literacy as a fundamental tool for empowerment, enables every citizen to embrace technology confidently. With the right approach and commitment, along with sufficient resources, building a highly skilled nation in the digital age can be possible.

2. Providing Adequate ML Facilities with Network Coverage

The Federal Government of Nigeria through Federal and State Ministries of Education should provide adequate ML facilities with network coverage in higher

institutions of learning. This is crucial for academic success, for full engagement in civic life in the twenty-first century and to prepare students for the workforce. Additionally, academic staff need a variety of media literacy resources for effective teaching and learning in higher education institutions to enhance effective online instruction.

3. Comprehensive Training on MLS to Academic Staff for Online Teaching and Research Activities

The findings of the study highlight the importance of information literacy in workplace settings and suggest that institutions of higher learning should consider implementing training programmes to enhance media literacy skills among their employees (Naveed et al., 2022). According to Mandang (2017), Training is a vital part of human resource investment to improve work abilities and skills to improve employee performance. Resources, tools, and technologies that support the diverse levels of media literacy training seekers must be available too. Through continuous, well-coordinated academic training programmes, training, and skills development, academics will perform their core functions creditably. To sustain academic staff media literacy skills, constant training of academics on media literacy skills acquisition is hereby recommended to provide the academic staff with key, high-level generic skills like the capacity for lifelong critical, conceptual, and reflective thinking, and attributes such as creativity and originality. Thus, the management of education colleges must constantly organize media literacy skills programmes to develop media-literate academics.

Conclusion

In Nigeria, colleges of education play a crucial role in higher learning by providing individuals with the essential skills needed for successful academic careers. Professors at these institutions play a vital role in imparting necessary knowledge to students and nurturing their independence and confidence. Academics must possess strong MLS to excel in their roles as educators and researchers. These competencies allow individuals to identify their information needs, access and evaluate sources of knowledge and overcome obstacles to acquiring information. Scholars can more effectively fulfil their roles by honing these skills, not only improving their teaching and research but also cultivating critical thinking and intellectual curiosity among students.

This study investigates the utilization of MLS by academic staff in Nigeria's colleges of education to meet the current teaching and research requirements. The research aims to fill a notable gap in the existing literature. This highlights the significance of these skills in allowing scholars to obtain, organize, and evaluate information resources, which in turn shapes how others in the educational system use information. The findings indicate that academic staff of colleges of education have high degree of media literacy. This indicates the importance of customized strategies to enhance ML processing in various academic settings. The study suggests that the National Commission of Colleges of Education should consider integrating the use of media Literacy skills when assessing the performance of academic staff. To promote the production of valuable research and contribute to personal and societal development, it is imperative to prioritize continuous efforts aimed at improving media literacy skills. The importance of ongoing skill development is emphasized to meet the

changing requirements of higher education and to ensure that academics can effectively fulfil their roles as educators and researchers. The study's findings have broad implications that go beyond the academic realm. They provide a solid basis for future research and policy-making efforts focused on enhancing ML proficiency across all levels of education.

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