


Chapter 3

Aspects of Digital Accessibility for Developing Educational Materials in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Digital accessibility aims to provide equal access to educational materials, particularly for students with disabilities. This study examines the integration of international digital accessibility standards into higher education, focusing on the development of accessible digital documents. By analyzing accessibility policies from 19 universities, the research identifies best practices and challenges in ensuring inclusive digital content. The study maps accessibility recommendations across seven key areas, document structure, text formatting, hyperlink usage, image and visual object adjustments, color and contrast considerations, table formatting, and PDF accessibility. Findings reveal a gap between policy adoption and implementation, highlighting the need for structured guidelines, faculty training, and institutional commitment. The research underscores the importance of standardized accessibility frameworks and continuous faculty development to foster an inclusive learning environment.

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INTRODUCTION

This research explores the integration of digital accessibility standards in the development of educational materials, with a specific focus on digital document accessibility in higher education.

The study analyses how accessibility guidelines from different universities align with international standards, such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and the accessibility principles outlined by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). By analyzing accessibility policies and recommendations from 19 universities, this research identifies best practices for formatting digital content and examines the challenges faced by institutions in implementing accessibility guidelines effectively. The study also explores the role of faculty training and institutional support in ensuring accessibility compliance, as well as the disparities between policy adoption and real-world implementation in higher education institutions.

This paper provides a structured approach to improving digital accessibility in educational materials by mapping accessibility recommendations across seven key areas, document structure, text formatting, hyperlink usage, image and visual object adjustments, color and contrast considerations, table formatting, and PDF accessibility. A comparative analysis of university guidelines highlights both the similarities and differences in accessibility policies, showing how some institutions have implemented structured, implement policies while others rely on voluntary adoption by faculty and content creators.

The research is structured around three key questions, how international digital accessibility standards influence the development of inclusive digital documents in higher education (1), what are the best practices for ensuring digital accessibility in educational materials (2), and how do universities compare in their approaches to training programs regarding the digital accessibility (3). The findings contribute to the broader goal of equitable access to learning resources by providing insights into strategies for creating accessible educational content. Through this study, universities, policymakers, and educators can better understand the importance of digital accessibility and the steps required to ensure an inclusive learning environment for all students.

The chapter begins by reviewing international accessibility standards, legal frameworks, and pedagogical approaches, synthesizing key insights from the literature. It then outlines the methodology used to analyze accessibility policies from 19 universities and presents a comparative analysis of their approaches. Building on these findings, the chapter distills best practices into actionable guidelines for the creation of accessible digital documents. The discussion extends beyond technical design to address systemic barriers, faculty readiness, and the lived experiences of students with disabilities, situating accessibility within broader institutional and

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