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**Abstract**

The first section of this article examines the current models of "virtual universities" that provide various forms of distance education. Distance teaching at university level is offered, nowadays, through at least five major organizational models: single-mode distance teaching universities, dual- and mixed-mode universities, extension services, consortia-type ventures, and new technology-based universities. The article analyzes the merits of the new information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the context of each of these five models, as well as the problems associated with their implementation. The second section discusses future trends in the development of distance education in higher education systems and touches upon five domains: potential student constituencies, new roles for the academic faculty, new forms of knowledge generation and delivery, the restructuring of the organizational infrastructures of universities, and the impact of globalization on higher education markets. The conclusion highlights some of the major difficulties in the processes of implementing

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the new ICTs into various higher education systems and offers a few suggestions as to how to proceed in tackling major problems. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)