

Blockchain will start being used to support EdTech development

Media attention continues to associate blockchain technology with finance, and fluctuations in the price of cryptocurrencies. Yet the cryptography at the core of the technology holds great promise for applications in many other areas – not least, because it could wrestle the ownership and control of personal data back to individuals.

Within the EdTech sector, blockchain has all the prerequisites to support new and emerging trends in the digitization of credentials and qualifications. New blockchain applications will likely emerge, encouraged by the success of high-profile education pilots: from the repurposing of the Europass (the EU initiative to share qualifications across borders) to create blockchain record systems to support the claims of refugees, to new models for University education such as the well-publicised Woolf University project (the first blockchain powered University).

However, blockchain is not a cure-all solution. It's too early to determine if learners and employers see value in blockchain credentials. Open standards may be marginalised in favour of solutions from trusted software houses. National initiatives need to scale up and gain traction in other record-keeping areas of the economy. We need legal clarity on how blockchain can be GDPR-compliant. And while blockchain will make it easier to share credentials, 'garbage in/garbage out' rules prevail: how will quality assurance happen, and who grants certification?

Despite these challenges, I would say that the outlook on developing this technology for enhancing learning remains overwhelmingly positive. We are only in the early stages of understanding how blockchain will help bring sustainable change to the education sector.

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