RESEARCHERS BOOTCAMP

THEME 7: PUTTING THE INDIVIDUAL AT THE CENTRE: THE ROLE OF DIGITAL IDENTITY DURING THE TIME OF COVID-19

PURPOSE: Identify and understand examples of the use of self-sovereign identity (SSI) in education internationally, and instances in which data ownership and control have been successfully decentralised.

EDUCATION RESEARCHERS RESPOND TO LOCKDOWN

DATE
30 March – 30 April

NUMBER OF RESEARCHERS
8

APPROACH
Case studies through desktop research

CASE STUDIES
COVI-ID; COVID-19 Credentials Initiative; Pan-Canadian Trust; Registree; Ethense; Evernym

AUDIENCE
Policy makers
HEI leadership
Data specialists

FINDINGS

SSI is a concept that makes it possible for individuals to have control over their digital credentials. Examples of credentials include an individual's passport, degrees, bank cards and medical records.

While technology allows for interactions and activities to continue during COVID-19, online exchanges bring with them the risk of data privacy being breached.

If educational data were decentralised, individuals with self-sovereign identity (SSI) would be able to protect, secure, control and verify their identity records, including data related to their education, training, skills, projects, job history, assessments and more. Individual citizens would be able to turn their skills, training and experience into genuine value in the labour market, and access better career and development opportunities.

Who owns and has access to our data is an increasingly contested question in the modern age. SSI allows for a decentralised approach to data ownership and offers a solution to the issue of data privacy.

If educational data were decentralised, individuals would be able to control their identity records, including their qualifications, and provide this data to third parties without the need to rely on institutions or a central repository of data.

COVID-19 Credentials Initiative and the COVI-ID app could inform the adoption of SSI in educational settings beyond the pandemic.

BENEFITS & RECOMMEDATIONS

- SSI is an effective way of issuing and verifying digital transcripts.
- SSI can be used in supporting and digitising the whole learner ecosystem.
- SSI can be used for matching labour demand and supply.
- SSI allows for information exchange between institutions and systems.
- SSI provides a frictionless user experience.

A use case for SSI in education during the COVID-19 pandemic is eminently feasible. With the increasing need for online education, verifiable credentials would greatly benefit the fight to continue education in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic by addressing the real concerns of security and accessibility. SSI technology is scalable, interoperable and cheap, and could be applied in education in an effective and revolutionary way. It could provide students with verifiable visibility and a cryptographic trail that would make managing their education much less onerous and fraught.

Barbara Dale-Jones (Lead Researcher), More Manda (Co-Lead Researcher), Eduarda Castel-Branco (Peer Reviewer), Anam Magudu, Ashley Tshabalala, Busiswa Buso, Gomolemo Valencia Fritz, Michael Raven, Zani de Wit

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