MULTIDISCIPLINARY ROUND TABLE – Cryptocurrency

Feb 25th, 2025

Jiading Zhou

**Summary of the School Meeting on Blockchain and Cryptocurrency**

The school meeting had a cool discussion about cryptocurrency and blockchain with Dr. Suhabe Bugrara from the College of Engineering and Dr. Oommen Thomas from the School of Business. They talked about how crypto works, its impact on the economy, and how money has changed over time.

**What is Cryptocurrency?**

The discussion started by explaining cryptocurrency in a simple way. Some people think crypto is just gambling or a risky investment, while others believe it’s a game-changer for finance. The professors talked about how money has evolved, from trading goods to using paper money, and now digital currency like Bitcoin. Cryptocurrency is a new way of handling money without needing banks, and it keeps everything secure and transparent.

**How Does Blockchain Work?**

Dr. Bugrara explained blockchain in a way that makes sense. Basically, it’s like a digital record book that everyone in the network has a copy of. This makes it hard for anyone to cheat because everything is verified by multiple people. The system uses cryptographic signatures (which are like super secure digital stamps) to make sure transactions are legit and can’t be faked.

One of the biggest problems with digital money is "double-spending," which means spending the same money twice. Normal banks prevent this by keeping track of balances, but Bitcoin solves it by using a system where all transactions are checked and approved by the network before they are added to the blockchain.

**Is Crypto a Better Option Than Regular Money?**

Dr. Thomas explained that Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies are different from regular money because their supply is limited. Unlike regular money, which governments can print more of (causing inflation), Bitcoin has a fixed supply. This means it should, in theory, keep its value better over time.

But there’s a big problem—Bitcoin is super unpredictable. Its price goes up and down a lot, making it hard to use for everyday purchases. One day it’s worth a lot, the next day it crashes. That’s why some experts don’t trust it as a reliable currency.

**Crypto vs. Gold**

Dr. Thomas also talked about how people compare Bitcoin to gold. Gold has been used as a safe store of value for centuries because it’s rare and doesn’t lose value easily. Bitcoin is similar because there’s a limited amount of it. However, gold is physical, and people trust it more, while Bitcoin is digital and not everyone understands it yet.

One big advantage of Bitcoin over gold is that it’s easy to move around. If you need to send money to another country, you can do it instantly with Bitcoin, while moving gold takes a lot of effort. But Bitcoin’s price is unstable, and governments don’t fully support it yet, which makes it risky.

**Can Crypto Make Payments Faster and Cheaper?**

One of the best things about cryptocurrency is how it can make payments faster and cheaper. Normally, sending money across countries takes days and has high fees, but with Bitcoin or stablecoins (cryptos tied to real-world money like the US dollar), transactions are almost instant and cost much less. Stablecoins are more predictable because their value doesn’t change wildly like Bitcoin.

This is a big deal, especially for people in countries with weak financial systems. With just a phone and the internet, they can send and receive money without needing a bank.

**Problems and Future of Crypto**

Even though crypto sounds great, there are still big issues:

1. Government Rules: Many countries don’t know how to regulate cryptocurrency. Some governments ban it, while others try to control it with taxes and rules.
2. Security Risks: If someone loses their private key (which is like a super secure password), they lose their crypto forever. There’s no way to recover it, unlike a lost bank password.
3. Helping the Unbanked: Crypto can be useful for people who don’t have access to banks, especially in poor countries. But for now, not many people know how to use it.
4. Big Companies Getting Involved: More businesses and even some governments are starting to accept Bitcoin, which might help it become more stable and trusted in the future.

**Final Thoughts**

The discussion ended with the idea that cryptocurrency is exciting but still has many challenges. It could change how money works in the future, but things like government rules, security, and price stability need to be improved. Whether it replaces regular money or just becomes another financial tool, crypto and blockchain are here to stay.

This meeting helped us understand cryptocurrency from both a technical and financial perspective, and it’s clear that this is a fast-changing industry. Also, the base logic of blockchain could benefit to other industry that required public opening and supervision.