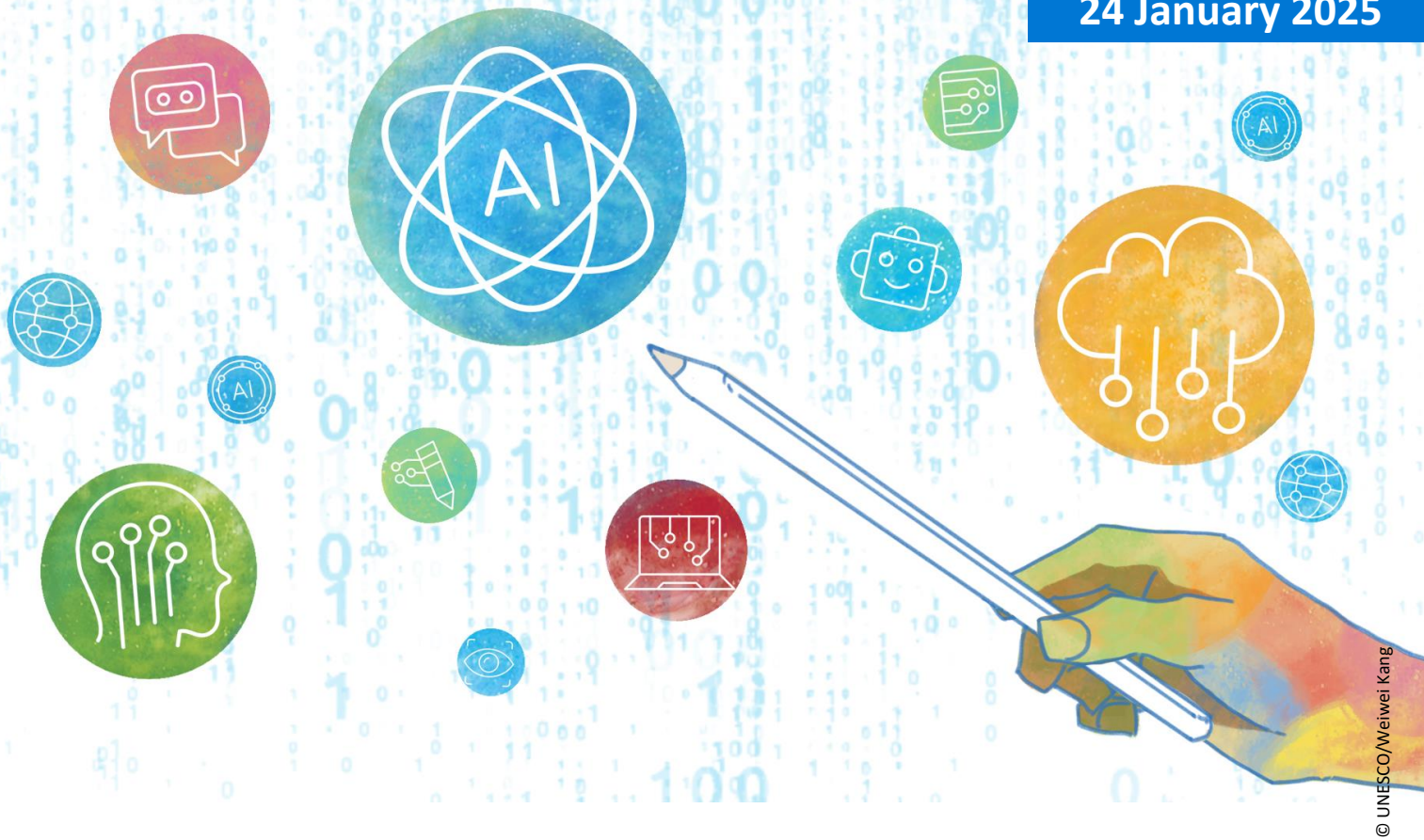


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## Concept Note

As computer and AI-driven systems become more powerful, the boundaries between human intention and machine-driven action often blur. This raises critical questions about how to protect and, ideally, elevate human agency in an age of technological acceleration and expanding automation.

The 2025 International Day of Education – *AI and Education: Preserving Human Agency in a World of Automation* – will explore how education can help people understand and steer AI to better ensure that they retain control over this new class of technology and are able to direct it towards desired objectives that respect human rights and advance progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals.

### AI and automation in education

Advancements in AI are allowing new forms of automation in all sectors, including in education. Recent studies suggest that in high-income countries, over two thirds of secondary school students are using generative AI tools to ‘automate’ the completion of academic assignments. Teachers and schools are also directing AI technologies to assess and respond to student work. Learning pathways, traditionally selected and specified by human teachers and curriculum development experts, are increasingly being determined by AI-enabled machines. In higher education, AI software is playing a role everything from instruction to admission processes. In some countries, as many as eight in ten universities currently rely on AI to filter and rank student applications and, in some cases, extend offers of admission or rejection fully autonomously. AI utilities are also helping to assemble and analyze large educational datasets to

inform the allocation of resources and influence decisions as varied as placing teachers, planning academic calendars and projecting dropout. Coming to an understanding of how much automation and machine analysis is helpful is, ultimately, a task for education. Research is needed to strengthen the alignment of machine decisions with human intention and values and to defer machine choices to human judgment when there is ambiguity. Clarifying how to maintain lines of accountability for actions taken by machines, both within and beyond the education sector, is also an urgent task that education and research can help unravel.

### Education to develop AI competencies

Education has a foundational role to play in helping individuals and groups determine what tasks should be outsourced to AI and what tasks need to remain firmly in human hands. Making these determinations requires understanding AI – fundamentals about how the technology works, its current and ever-evolving capabilities, its strengths, its limitations and its risks. Education systems around the world are rightly being updated to help teachers as well as learners develop the AI competencies needed to navigate a world where AI is likely to be more and more pervasive. The UNESCO competency frameworks for students and for teachers provide roadmaps. They clarify that AI literacy requires cultivating technical understandings as well as critical and ethical awareness of AI tools. Education helps teachers and learners ask not only how a tool works and towards what ends, but on whose terms the tool is being used. Developing the AI competencies of all learners will help ensure that human agency and intention are preserved even as technology continues to advance.

### International Day of Education 2025 aims to:

- **Examine new possibilities** offered by AI, especially for teaching, learning, assessment and educational administration.
- **Promote the development of critical AI literacies** by equipping educators and learners with the competencies needed to understand, use and influence AI technologies, in line with the UNESCO AI competency frameworks for teachers and students.
- **Ensure that AI complements, rather than replaces, the essential human elements of learning**, including the cultivation of in-person relationships and emotional intelligence.