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The constitution of agency in developing lifelong learning ability : the "being" mode

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**Abstract**

In an age of uncertainty, one of the aims of higher education is to establish lifelong learning abilities in students. However, different authors remain divided on the question of what constitutes 'lifelong learning ability?'. This article proposes the hypothesis that the cultivation of lifelong learning abilities in higher education needs to be conceptualised and sustained through a focus on the constitution and operation of agency. The cultivation of lifelong learning as a set of agent abilities needs to be grounded within the mode of being, a concept inspired by Heidegger, rather than within having or doing. While the importance of developing epistemology by focusing on learning as delivery (having) and interacting (doing) is not denied, this article suggests that higher education also concerns ontological learning. The Heideggerian perspective on being provides a more person-focused approach that is useful for providing balance and congruence between feeling and thought and between mind and body, supplementing the having and doing approaches by inviting students to reflect on their own growth and leading not only to knowledge construction for problem-solving but also to the construction of subjectivity as a means of finding meaning in the learner's existence in

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times of uncertainty. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Liu, Amy, E-Mail: amy.liu@ucla.edu