

Pedagogías del cuidado y la ruptura del androcentrismo desde una perspectiva epistemológica feminista en la educación superior

Pedagogies of care and the breakdown of androcentrism from a feminist epistemology perspective in higher education

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Abstract

This article discusses the need to dismantle the androcentric paradigm that has always prevailed in Higher Education (HE), where instrumental rationality and disembodied objectivity are favored over ethics and human relationships. Assuming Feminist

Epistemology as an epistemological stance, the research addresses the proposal and analysis of Care Pedagogies as a transformative pedagogy. Methodologically, ADC is used to reveal how the hidden curriculum and evaluation practices in higher education perpetuate gender inequalities. The results reaffirm that care should be recognized as a first-order ethical and professional competence, not as a secondary task. It is concluded that breaking the androcentric mold requires institutionalizing care, transforming policy to recognize and pay teachers' care work, and challenging the tyranny of meritocracy. The debate refutes inefficiency and argues that care is a requirement of social justice and a condition for inclusive academic excellence. Institutions are invited to move toward a "Caring University" that safeguards the well-being and holistic development of the individual. **Keywords:** Care Pedagogy, Androcentrism, Feminist Epistemology, Higher Education, Gender Justice.

Resumen

Este artículo aborda la necesidad de desmontar el paradigma androcéntrico que siempre ha prevalecido en la Educación Superior (ES), donde se prioriza la racionalidad instrumental y la objetividad incorpórea sobre la ética y las relaciones humanas. Asumiendo la Epistemología Feminista como postura epistemológica, la investigación aborda la propuesta y el análisis de las Pedagogías del Cuidado como una pedagogía transformadora. Metodológicamente, se utiliza la CDA para revelar cómo el currículo oculto y las prácticas de evaluación en la educación superior perpetúan las desigualdades de género. Los resultados reafirman que el cuidado debe reconocerse como una competencia ética y profesional de primer orden, no como una tarea secundaria. Se concluye que romper el molde androcéntrico requiere institucionalizar el cuidado, transformar las políticas para reconocer y remunerar el trabajo de cuidado del profesorado y desafiar la tiranía de la meritocracia. El debate refuta la ineficiencia y argumenta que el cuidado es un requisito de la justicia social y una condición para la excelencia académica inclusiva. Se invita a las instituciones a avanzar hacia una "Universidad del Cuidado" que proteja el bienestar y el desarrollo integral de la persona. **Palabras clave:** Pedagogía del Cuidado, Androcentrismo, Epistemología Feminista, Educación Superior, Justicia de Género.

Introduction

The Crisis of Hegemonic Rationality in Higher Education Higher education has historically developed under an androcentric epistemological paradigm that privileges instrumental rationality, disembodied objectivity, and autonomy as criteria for legitimate knowledge (Wold). This framework, a legacy of the Enlightenment and reinforced by neoliberal technocracy, has excluded knowledge and practices deemed “feminine” or “soft,” thereby excluding the emotional, relational, and ethical dimensions of the teaching–learning process. It is therefore necessary to subject this foundational structure to review, understanding that the pursuit of truth cannot remain detached from the power relations that permeate the faculty and the curriculum (Pascoe et al.).

The call for feminist epistemology as a framework for breaking with this hegemony positions feminist epistemology as a necessary conceptual and political tool to denounce women’s absence in the production of knowledge and to propose a new way of knowing (van der Miesen et al.). This perspective argues that the localized experiences and situated knowledge of historically oppressed groups (women, among others) provide “strong objectivity” (Harding), revealing the unconscious biases of dominant sciences. The androcentric rupture in HE therefore requires a revolution in the hierarchy of what is considered knowledge and how it is recognized (De Vries et al.).

The emergence of the pedagogy of care as an alternative ethic In this feminist critique, the pedagogy of care (ethics of care) emerges as a counterpoint to the competitive individualism that prevails in today’s higher education (Dunn). This pedagogy proposes that learning is not an individual process of accumulation, but rather an intersubjective process of responsibility for others, of caring for others, and of recognizing vulnerability. Caring in teaching means altering power relations between teachers and students and among peers, with empathy and solidarity as academic skills just as relevant as methodological rigor (Doyle et al.).

The Curricular Dimension of Androcentrism to Dismantle The break with androcentrism in secondary education must be realized thru the transformation of the curriculum. Today, the selection of authors, theories, and case studies continues to render women’s contributions invisible in almost every field of knowledge, from philosophy to the exact sciences (Chaparro-Saenz and Galpin). A pedagogy of care, grounded in feminism, involves incorporating subaltern epistemologies and deconstructing hegemonic historical narratives. This involves transforming assessment methods, opting for cooperative and reflective projects instead of individualistic, hierarchical memorization (Mutinta).

Effects of care on mental health and classroom climate Beyond theory, care pedagogies directly influence the institutional climate and the mental health of the

university community, especially women and minorities (Ruiz-Pérez and Pastor-Moreno). Excessive demands, competition, and a lack of emotional support lead to burnout and dropping out of studies. By making care a pedagogical focus, the university becomes a more human and less violent place, where making mistakes is part of learning and caring for one another is a value (Ajduković et al.).

Political and institutional challenges for transformation. These pedagogies encounter strong resistance because they question the very foundation of the meritocratic and productivist system of higher education (Silva et al.). The logic of scientific productivity (in terms of papers and impact metrics) tends to penalize care practices, which require time, conversation, and personal commitment things that are difficult to measure. Transformation entails an institutional commitment to changing faculty promotion criteria and recognizing mentoring/guidance as a top-tier academic merit (Bonilla-Algovia et al.).

Location and Objective of This Article This article opposes the hegemonic notion of academic excellence and proposes that an excellent higher education institution (HEI) is an ethical and caring one (Mora-Ladino et al.). The objective is to discuss the possibility and the ethical-political uses of the ethics of care and feminist epistemology in curriculum design and in everyday pedagogical practices. It aims to outline a path toward a pedagogy of social justice, respect for difference, and the holistic development of students (Richardson and Langford).

Organization of the debate and expected contribution: The reflection will be organized by first deconstructing the foundations of the androcentric paradigm in higher education, and then conceptually defining care pedagogies in education. Next, specific examples of curricular intervention will be analyzed, and finally, the institutional policy implications for supporting cultural change will be discussed (Vanegas and Pinzón). It is hoped that this study will serve as a theoretical and practical framework for teachers, university administrators, and curriculum designers concerned with a more just, equitable, and human higher education (Lugova et al.).

Methodology

Research Approach: The Qualitative-Reflexive Paradigm. The study is framed within the qualitative research paradigm, with a reflective-critical approach. We do not seek statistical generalization or the empirical verification of causal hypotheses, but rather the interpretive understanding of conceptual frameworks, power relations, and the ethical and political consequences of Higher Education (HE) (Fox and Alldred). This perspective is well suited to feminist epistemology, as it enables the denaturalization of androcentric categories and the construction of knowledge

that is situated and committed to social transformation (Wilson and Smirles).

Methodological Design: Academic Essay and Critical Document Analysis

The methodological design is implemented in the academic essay (or reflective article). This type of writing is the perfect channel for criticism and conceptual proposals, for giving voice to multiple theoretical sources, and thus constructing one's own well-argued discourse (Lundberg et al., 2020).

The main technique for collecting and analyzing information is Critical Document Analysis (CDA), and it focused on:

1. **Comprehensive literature review:** Primary and secondary sources of academic literature were identified in three overlapping areas:
2. **Gender studies and feminist epistemology:** initial texts by central authors (Harding, Haraway, Gilligan, Noddings) that question the neutrality of science and propose the ethics of care.
3. **Critical pedagogy and curriculum theory:** books that examine the hidden curriculum and power relations in schools (Freire, Giroux).
4. **Sociology of Higher Education:** articles and books on the structure, evaluation, and androcentric ethos of the current academy.

Analysis and argumentation process: The analysis was carried out in three sequential and recursive stages:

Phase I: Conceptual deconstruction. It identified and mapped the central concepts (androcentrism, objectivity, care, academic excellence) to expose their genealogies and their operation within the dominant HE paradigm. Literature that offers an explicit feminist critique of these ideas was prioritized (Denscombe).

Phase II: Theoretical Articulation. The argumentation between feminist epistemology and the pedagogy of care was connected. This stage consisted of synthesizing ethical and ontological frameworks to develop the theoretical framework for the “androcentric rupture” in pedagogical practice (Marra and Nielsen).

Critical Positioning and Reflective Proposal. Established theoretical evidence was leveraged to defend the need for institutional and pedagogical change. The writing sought to develop propositional conclusions and lines of action that invite the university

community to reframe its roles and practices from the perspective of the ethics of care and gender justice (Mishra and Alok).

Criteria for Qualitative Rigor. As a reflective study, methodological rigor was ensured thru the following qualitative criteria, which are essential for the credibility of an academic essay:

- **Credibility (or Trustworthiness):** Guarantyd by theoretical triangulation and conceptual saturation, reviewing various sources until repetitive patterns in the critique of androcentrism were found (Marra & Nielsen, 2025).
- **Transferability:** No empirical data are provided, but the applicability of the concepts (care, androcentrism) to various Spanish-speaking university contexts is supported by the universal nature of feminist critique of academic patriarchy (Kiani et al.).
- **Verifiability:** The analysis and argumentation procedure is open and transparent, and other scholars can follow the steps and the theoretical evidence on which each critical judgment is based(Roman-Acosta).

Results

The Verification of Androcentrism as a University Ethos The documentary analysis revealed that androcentrism is the structuring principle of the HE ethos, recognizing only technical rationality and disembodied objectivity as valid. This model is not merely a topical bias, but an ontological one that defines the “ideal researcher” as a neutral, autonomous individual, emotionally and socially detached characteristics traditionally associated with masculinity. The result is the constant devaluation of practical, relational, and embodied knowledge, maintaining a hierarchy of knowledge that excludes women’s contributions and qualitative methodologies. This discovery reinforces the need to deconstruct, not just add female authors to the canon(De Vries et al.).

Feminist epistemology as a framework for methodological questioning: feminist epistemology stands as the indispensable theoretical matrix for achieving an androcentric rupture, providing the notion of “situated knowledge.” This theoretical discovery replaces neutrality with epistemic responsibility, since the perspective of the knower (their experience, gender, social class) is a source of richness rather than a bias to be eliminated(Hernández-Flórez and Klimenko). Incorporating this perspective entails a methodological requirement: higher education must recognize and

promote reflexive, autoethnographic, and participatory action research methodologies, which have been excluded by positivist science. Feminism not only adds a topic, but also changes the way truth is produced in academia(Jaimes-Velásquez et al.).

Care as a central academic competency One of the most important findings is the redefinition of the Pedagogy of Care, no longer as an act of individual goodwill but as an ethical and academic competency. The study revealed that care needs to move beyond interpersonal forms (tutoring, empathy) to be codified in the institutional structure (flexibility policies, formative assessment)(Hernández-Flórez, Rodríguez-Avila, et al.). This pedagogy implies that faculty members are aware of students' vulnerabilities and needs, particularly those stemming from social responsibilities (motherhood, care work). This recognition shifts the hierarchical classroom structure to one in which trust and respect form the foundation for students' critical autonomy(Sweet).

The hidden curriculum and its resistance to change. The analysis of the hidden curriculum revealed its capacity as a mechanism of resistance to care based pedagogies. Evaluation methods, the overvaluation of individual competition over collaboration, the absence of gender-sensitive protocols... are centrifugal forces that drive change away. For example, requiring students to complete programs within the allotted time, while ignoring their current life circumstances, is a pedagogical practice that prioritizes outcomes over well-being(Giota and Gustafsson). It is determined that an androcentric rupture will not be achieved without deconstructing the unwritten norms that govern interaction and time in academia(Brecht et al.).

Discovery of interdependence: The care–excellence relationship: the argumentative analysis showed how care and academic excellence are interdependent and that the false dichotomy between them is erroneous(Martinez et al.). A school with care-based pedagogies (time for conversation, formative assessment, emotional support) does not lower its standards; rather, it creates the conditions for more students, with greater diversity, to reach their potential. Excellence, from this feminist perspective, means the institution's ability to foster the holistic development of all its members, with structural conditions (access, retention, and success) that are not biased by gender or class(Newcomb et al.).

Implications for teacher training and professional recognition: a key finding is the need to transform teacher training and the teaching profession to recognize care work. Today, evaluation indicators (publications, research projects) penalize the time spent on mentoring, tutoring, and legitimate support the very heart of care pedagogies(Grice et al.). To institutionalize the androcentric rupture, universities must develop faculty evaluation systems that measure and financially reward these

relational practices. Without this political and administrative change, the pedagogy of care will continue to be a marginal practice, sustained by the goodwill of teachers mostly women at the expense of their own professional development(Meagher et al.).

Toward the Caring and Just University In summary, the theoretical findings converge on one proposal: the future university needs to become a Caring University. This means going beyond instruction to form the ethical-political subject who knows how to live with others(Meagher et al.). Care pedagogies, from a feminist critique, provide guidance for dismantling androcentric epistemology, opening spaces to build knowledge collectively, ethically, and responsibly. The use of this matrix is not a pedagogical option, but a duty of social justice and renewed quality (Hernández-Flórez, Klimenko, et al.).

Table 1.

Comparative Table: Androcentric Rupture in Higher Education

Contrast Criterion	Androcentric Paradigm (Dominant Model)	Feminist Proposal (Pedagogy of Care)	Theoretical Finding of the Rupture
Epistemological Pillar	Disembodied Objectivity: The claim of seeking neutral, universal, and decontextualized knowledge.	Situated knowledge: It acknowledges that the experience and situation of the knower are sources of “strong objectivity” and critique.	Truth is transformed: Knowledge is justified by its ethical responsibility, by its justice, not by its neutrality.
Teaching Goal	Instrumental rationality: Graduate competent technicians oriented toward productivity and data collection.	Ethical and holistic education: To develop critical, interdependent individuals capable of responding to social and emotional needs.	Redefining success: Educational success is about being interdependent and contributing to the common good, not just getting good grades.

Assessment of 'Care'	Marginal/Invisible Practice: Considered a soft, supportive task, a personal, non-academic responsibility (emotional burdens).	Core Academic Competency: It is integrated as a guiding element in curriculum design and institutional evaluation.	Institutionalization of care: Care ceases to be a voluntary action and becomes a political-administrative obligation and a teaching value.
Evaluation Mechanism	Competition and meritocracy: Hierarchical, summative, and individual grading that rewards performance under pressure and tight deadlines.	Formative and Reflective Assessment: Appreciate the process, collaboration, and flexibility in the face of life's circumstances (care-giving responsibilities, mental health).	Challenge to meritocracy: The evaluation must be sensitive to gender and to students' material living conditions.
Institutional climate	Competitive and hierarchical: It creates stress, burnout, and extreme self-reliance, sidelining vulnerability.	Cooperative and Human: Foster trust, respect, and the acceptance of mistakes as learning opportunities.	Humanizing the classroom: The classroom is a safe space where intersubjectivity and dialog are pedagogies.

The epistemological shift and the re-signification of academic rationality The table shows that the greatest rupture proposed by feminist epistemology is epistemological and ontological (Koch et al.). The androcentric paradigm, by demanding “disembodied objectivity,” imposes a rationality that excludes the material and social conditions of the subjects who learn and know (Muñoz-Zapata and Osorio-Franco).

On the contrary, feminist “Situated Knowledge” not only questions this purported neutrality but also redefines the validity of knowledge in terms of ethical responsibility and the capacity to create social justice, replacing abstract truth with situated truth (Abir and Zrizi). This theoretical shift directly impacts the purpose of teaching, moving from training a “technical expert” (instrumental

rationality) to fostering a “critical and interdependent subject” (ethical and holistic education). Excellence, then, ceases to be an individualistic measure and becomes an institutional capacity to cultivate collective well-being (John et al.).

Institutionalize care as a political mandate. The second finding of the framework addresses the institutionalization of care and its effect on power relations and evaluation. When “Marginal Care” is compared with “Core Academic Competence,” the need for HE to recognize relational work politically and pedagogically becomes evident (Cookson et al.). The critique of classical “meritocracy” competitive and summative calls for a radical transformation of evaluation mechanisms into formative and flexible models that are sensitive to gender and students’ care responsibilities. If universities do not incorporate care as a political and administrative requirement (recognizing tutoring and support), the androcentric model will continue to operate thru the hidden curriculum, undermining efforts to humanize the classroom and excluding voices and methodologies that do not align with the individualistic, productivist logic (Hall and Evans).

Discussion

The dispute with the ethics of justice The results of this article, which propose the Pedagogy of Care as the ethical center of Higher Education (HE), come into tension with the initial discussion between the ethics of justice and the ethics of care, as framed by Carol Gilligan. Our proposal transcends the initial dichotomy, arguing that care is not a private, “feminine” moralization but a demand for social justice in the public sphere of academia (Sánchez-Hernández et al.). By recognizing androcentrism as the main obstacle, the debate shifts to a structural level: the incorporation of care is a necessary condition for equality, not a supplementary pedagogical measure. This challenges neoliberal conceptions of higher education that oppose efficiency (rule-based justice) to humanity (care) (Torres-García et al.).

The critique of neoliberal excellence and the dialog with materialist feminism: redefining excellence as the capacity for interdependence (Pulice-Farrow et al.). The debate is that the hegemonic model of excellence (individual, productivist, metric-driven) rests on invisibilized care work, generally performed by women (at home or within the institution itself, thru unrecognized mentoring). Institutionalizing care: the article’s proposal challenges academic exploitation by recognizing mentoring as a top-tier merit. And this places the battle for pedagogies of care in the realm of labor rights and the fair distribution of burdens (Mora-Ladino et al.).

Differentiation from Non-Critical Wellness Models: Feminist care pedagogy differs from the wellness and student well-being models that have proliferated in higher education. And although these are necessary, they often remain focused on the student's personal adaptation to the aggressive environment (e.g., stress management), without questioning the structural conditions that cause it (the competitive system, the tyranny of grades, the androcentric curriculum) (Maliakkal and Reiter-Palmon). Our proposal, on the other hand, calls for a systemic transformation. The debate makes it clear that care is not a solution to remedy the harm, but rather an organizing principle that transforms evaluation, schedules, and retention policies (López-Urbe et al.).

Methodological contribution of feminist epistemology. The analytical-qualitative approach is justified to transcend the methodological tyranny of quantitative empiricism in educational research. The debate centers on the epistemic value of critical reflexivity, since only from "situated knowledge" (Haraway, Harding) can neutral categories (objectivity) be dismantled (Wilson and Smirles). The article contributes to the debate by showing that the legitimacy of knowledge about sex education does not stem from statistical samples, but from the sharpness of conceptual critique that reveals how power (androcentrism) is embodied in the most everyday pedagogical practices (Ajayi et al.).

Unlike traditional critical pedagogy (Freire, Giroux), care pedagogies share with critical pedagogy an interest in emancipation and the denaturalization of oppression, but this article advocates for broadening the critical agenda (Aránguez-Sánchez and Olariu). While critical pedagogy focused on social class and economic domination, we feminized the lens, showing that gender and affectivity are also forms of domination in the classroom. Dialog (praxis) involves care and attentive listening (*cuidado*) so that historically silenced and emotionally repressed voices (women, dissidents, minorities) can emerge and participate in liberation (Bauger).

Viability and Institutional Resistance A central aspect of the debate is the feasibility of developing a Pedagogy of Care in globalized university environments facing financial crises. The greatest resistance, as it turned out, is not ideological but administrative and financial (Martín-Valdunciel et al.). The debate refutes the claim that care is "inefficient" and argues the opposite: the school dropout and poor mental health generated by the androcentric system impose an extremely high economic and social cost. It is argued that successful implementation requires ethical leadership that redistributes resources, prioritizing spaces for dialog and teacher training in relational approaches, and demonstrating their long-term social profitability (Velasco-Domínguez and Castañeda-Xochitl).

Propositive implications and open avenues for future research Finally, this

reflection concludes with a proposal: the urgent need for the academic community to adopt the Pedagogy of Care as a regulatory framework (Osorio). Future research is encouraged to move beyond conceptual critique and empirically analyze the teaching practices that are already implementing it, creating case studies that confirm the improvement of school climate and academic performance from a gender perspective. The androcentric rupture is not a destination to reach, but a continuous path of ethical vigilance that demands ongoing reflexivity from all agents in higher education (Lagarde).

Conclusions

The Urgency of Epistemological Rupture The main conclusion of this reflective journey is that the hegemony of the androcentric paradigm in Higher Education (HE) represents an unsustainable structural burden on equity and authentic academic quality. It is verified that the demand for a “disembodied objectivity” is not a neutral scientific ideal, but an exclusionary practice that renders feminist epistemologies and situated knowledge invisible. The androcentric rupture is not something that can be added to the curriculum, but rather an ethical imperative that requires institutions to recognize that the legitimacy of knowledge is also measured by its contribution to social justice and relational well-being. The viability of contemporary higher education depends on embracing this plurality of ways of knowing.

The Pedagogy of Care as a Revolutionary Framework. The Pedagogy of Care stands as the most powerful theoretical and practical framework for bringing about this rupture, redefining itself as an institutional ethical competence rather than a personal virtue. Care, then, is a political axis of curriculum, assessment, and organizational culture, not a caregiving task. By placing attention, interdependence, and responsibility at its core, this pedagogy resists the neoliberal logic of competition and extraction. Well, caring practices are key to humanizing the classroom and preventing burnout and school dropout.

The political challenge of valuing the teaching profession thus lies in institutionalizing care by reforming the teaching career. As long as promotion and evaluation systems continue to recognize only measurable scientific productivity, the work of mentoring, support, and pedagogical sensitivity so characteristic of the Pedagogy of Care will remain invisible and devalued. It is concluded that without an explicit redefinition of merit criteria that monetize and legitimize the time spent on relational practices, change will be superficial. True transformation requires a budgetary and political commitment to end labor exploitation in academia.

Toward an evaluation with social justice. It is concluded that the androcentric, competitive, and individualistic evaluation model should be replaced by a formative and reflective evaluation with a gender perspective. This means that evaluation should not be limited to measuring acquired knowledge, but should also assess the student's ability to engage ethically with knowledge and their peers, valuing collaboration and flexibility. Its implementation is essential to ensure that academic success does not depend on caregiving responsibilities or material living conditions, thereby eradicating the inequity that the meritocratic model so effectively reproduces today.

Contributions and future lines of action: This reflective article contributes to gender and education studies by providing a conceptual framework for the situated articulation of feminist epistemology and pedagogical praxis. It concludes with an explicit call to action: institutions must stop treating gender as a matter of diversity and instead embrace it as an instrument for structural change. Future lines of research should focus on empirical case studies that capture the experiences of faculty members who are successfully implementing it and demonstrate the need for gender-responsive university policies and a Caring University.

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