

FEMININE EPISTEMOLOGY WITHIN ACADEMY: An Alternative Way of Pedagogical Practice

Naznin ♦

Abstract: The role of women in the field of teaching has been undervalued and denigrated for a long time by educational experts. Though the preponderance of women in teaching enabled them to apply their distinct ways of learning and teaching to the profession effectively, they were not recognized either in the historical texts of education or in the philosophy of education. The study analyses the traditional teaching patterns that persist and dominate contemporary pedagogical practice. Accordingly, women teachers are coerced to adopt a 'masculine' pedagogy, neglecting unique feminine qualities and abilities in education. Ensuing traditional patterns not only deprive women from exhibiting their inherent abilities but also impede positive changes in the quality of teaching. It is argued that the experience of mothering in the private sphere offers alternative ways of remodelling the pedagogical practices, facilitating professional educators in developing gender sensitivity, and sensitivity to different learning abilities among students.

Keywords: Epistemology, Gender Sensitivity, Pedagogical Practice.

1. Introduction

Despite considerable performance of women in contemporary education system, their academic and pedagogical accomplishments are recognized by neither educational philosophers nor academic intellectuals (specifically male

♦**Naznin** is a Research Scholar at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian School of Mines, Dhanbad. Her research interests in Applied Ethics include Ethics of Care in Pedagogy and Educational Ethics, Philosophical Aspects of Education, Social and Cognitive Aspects of Education, Educational Psychology, and Ethics in Teacher's Education.

personnel). Traditional teaching patterns dominate the contemporary pedagogical practice in which women's maternal epistemology, which involves distinct ways of knowing and has positive effects on pedagogical practices, is not accepted as contributing to professional work. The connection and application of these experiences are anticipated as learning trajectory of transformation especially in teaching. Though these qualities of women are gender related, they are not gender specific. The experience of mothering, however, contributes to an appropriate feminine epistemology that should be incorporated not only to bring their voice into the academy but also to offer a unique way of teaching that is effective in the classroom setting. It is therefore argued that it is wrong to assume that masculine epistemology is universal and is accessible for both men and women teachers whereas women epistemological contribution is neglected or reserved for only women. Indeed, the discussion and sharing of these experiences benefit the thinking and practices of educators, both male and female.

2. Forgotten Feminine Contribution in the Field of Teaching

Even though women constitute the majority of teachers in schools, schooling generally reinforces the dominance of masculine individuality in society; first by demonstrating and exaggerating those characteristics that distinguish males from females and then associating male achievements with success standards. Male accomplishments related to social, economic, scientific, technological developments are aggrandized in school texts in ways that favor masculine individuality.¹ Besides, conventional schooling system maintains masculinity, giving preference to rationality, objectivity and emotional detachment with students that compelled women teachers to emulate and continue masculine hegemony so that they could continue their teaching career. The subjugation of women's identity is the result of dominant masculinity. Tompkins noted that women are used as a medium in getting what men want, indeed women are forced

¹Madeleine R. Grumet, *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching*, Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988, 45.

to adopt, act and behave like men or as "extension of men."² Feminine stories that promote thinking about their particular kind of knowing have been muted by the educational institutions in which the future of students are shaped. Belenky et al³ documented that their ways of understanding and treating students, and the implementation of their epistemology to pedagogy have remarkable significance; yet they are not accepted as professional attributes. The reason for not including women's contribution in the history of education or philosophy of educational thought is not a matter of individual whims; instead it is a systematic result of the way the subject matter of education and philosophy is defined. Though Plato's conception of education gives importance to the education of children it overlooks the contribution of women care givers in providing daily care, their personal education and experience of child rearing.⁴

Though the practice of mothering involves a lot of patience, kindness and pain these activities are not included in the category of reward winning, and the society as a whole rewards and promotes the actions of masculine bravery and objectively measurable achievements. Masculine contribution to the development in various contexts is not a subject of either denial or contention; but excluding and demeaning feminine and matriarchal contribution with respect to nurturing and taking care of the family members subordinate their societal importance.

3. Caring and Teaching

Caring and teaching are related with each other, and with women, as the genius of women is related with their unique physical capacity to conceive, give birth and preserve the life. The biological aspects such as pregnancy, childbirth and lactation represent the receptiveness and sensitiveness that emotionally

²Jane Tompkins, "Me and My Shadow," *New Literary History* 19, 1 (1987), 169-178.

³Mary Field Belenky, et al., *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind*, New York: Basic Books, 1986, 20.

⁴Jane Roland Martin, "Excluding Women from the Educational Realm," *Harvard Educational Review* 52, 2 (July 1982), 133-148.

attach mothers and infants. For instance, infant produces behaviours such as crying and smiling in response of being loved and fed by the mother. Mothers' caring gestures such as kissing and rocking the babies are not simply fulfilling their tasks but teaching the baby to love.⁵ This feminized perspective of love and care indicates that there is a close connection between women, caring and teaching.

Love and care are comprehensively entailed in the process of mothering. It involves not only loving, tending and responding to the infants' needs and signals but also engaging them to learn from their experiences. Chodorow and Dinnerstein⁶ argued that woman as mother is the primary parent of the child on whom a child is emotionally dependent. The emotional dependency of the child on mother shows that there is a symbiotic relation between mother and child. Mother provides love to child, child experiences the pleasant feeling of love and care to which it responds, and it always seeks mother when in need. It is thus, the genius of woman who teaches children to love and maintain interpersonal relation by modelling the same. In this sense, teaching can be interpreted as the inherent ability of women, and the participation of women in teaching makes teaching women's work, a profession of love and care. Furthermore, women find teaching as a suitable profession because it allows them time in the maintenance of their personal domestic sphere besides earning.⁷ As a matter of fact, this profession provided many

⁵Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Standard Edition, VII. 1905; Cited in Mary D. Salter Ainsworth, "Object Relations, Dependency, and Attachment: A Theoretical Review of the Infant-Mother Relationship," *Child Development* 40 (1969), 969-1025.

⁶Nancy Julia Chodorow, *Reproduction of Mothering Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978; Dorothy Dinnerstein, *Mermaid and Minotaur*, New York: Harper and Row, 1976.

⁷Fatimah Kelleher, "Women and Teaching Profession: International Perspectives on the Feminisation Debate" (Paper presented at fourth International Policy Dialogue Forum of the International Task Force on Teachers for EFA, New Delhi, May 2012), 29-30.

women opportunities to get their first waged employment.⁸ Women and teaching are complementary to each other and teaching is often designated as a profession of women.⁹ The participation of women in teaching profession helps in shaping their professional careers and brings gradual transformation in their social as well as economic status. In this manner, the socio-cultural association of women with teaching makes it women specific work. In addition to this, the industrial revolution also played a significant role in labelling teaching as women's work. Eventually, teaching becomes one of the most female dominated occupations.¹⁰

It is sometimes argued that mothering has no direct link with teaching; mothering and teaching are distinct entities. There are effective women teachers who are neither mothers nor have memories of being mothered. Moreover, the practice of mothering is a full time engagement and is carried out in the private sphere while in teaching the observation of professional principles is mandatory and is formally practised within the scheduled timetable in the public sphere. The process of mothering is observed as subjective and emotional, while the role of teachers is constructed as objective and rational. Indeed, mothering does not require any professional understanding while professional training is obligatory in formal teaching. Teaching practice necessitates the amalgamation of content knowledge and pedagogy. Accordingly, teachers are required to procure this unique professional understanding in order to practice teaching effectively and manage the distinct situations of classroom environment. Turning to mothering, it mediates women's unique epistemological development, involving the knowledge and

⁸Fatimah Kelleher, *Women and the Teaching Profession Exploring the Feminisation Debate*, London: Commonwealth Secretariat and UNESCO, 2011, 5.

⁹Sandra Acker, "Carry on Caring: The Work of Women Teachers," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 16, 1 (July 2006), 21-36.

¹⁰Morwenna Griffiths, "The Feminisation of Teaching and the Practice of Teaching: Threat or Opportunity?" *Educational Theory* 56, 4 (November 2006), 387-405.

understanding of the particularity of a child, sensitization of needs in terms of gender, and the knowledge about mothering or how to practice motherhood. Moreover, mothering is not limited merely to biological mothers; instead it can be carried out by nursing women, or care takers who also inherently share a distinct way of knowing. Thus, maternal knowing though begins with the biological capacity it does not always stand alone as an intrinsic norm instead it seems as an unexplored avenue that suggests the limits of current understanding and the possibilities of alternative modes to be learnt.¹¹

4. Unique Feminine Epistemic Abilities

It is often an area of interest to know the unique ways of learning by women, their ways of knowing things and persons, and how they employ their learning into epistemological, or knowledge structures. Feminine epistemology or a feminist theory of knowledge encompasses women's experiences and perspectives, and the influences of gender in the knowledge production. Traditional epistemology upholds that knowledge claims are objective, impartial, universal and absolute. This kind of epistemology is designated as 'masculine' and it thwarts women either from acquiring or producing it.¹² Owing to male dominance, masculine epistemic standards are considered as universal standards, while women's ways of thinking and knowing are regarded as inferior and universally unacceptable. For instance, the practical know-how and the personal knowledge that mothers have of children are denigrated when it is marked as 'feminine'.¹³ Epistemology is often categorized as impersonal and personal in which the impersonal is 'masculine' while the personal, 'feminine'. Such an epistemology absolutely dichotomizes

¹¹Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, "Epistemology or Bust: A Maternal Feminist Knowing of Knowing," *The Journal of Religion*, 72, 2 (April 1992), 229-247.

¹²Elizabeth Anderson, "Feminist Epistemology: An Interpretation and a Defense," *Hypatia* 10, 3 (1995), 50-84.

¹³Anderson, "Feminist Epistemology," 50.

subjectivity and objectivity, nature and culture, and values rationality and abstraction and devalues emotion and concrete.

In this conception it is noted that women’s ways of knowing fundamentally involves their practical and personal knowledge followed by emotions and sentiments. Though emotional aspects are influenced by their biological capacity and their experience of maternal practice but the socio-cultural aspects are also responsible for conditioning women to be the bearer of emotion. Emotionally inexpressive women are doubted to be real women according to societal belief. Contrarily, male members are socially trained to emphasize on reasons in knowledge construction and are conditioned to suppress their emotion because men who express their emotion freely are suspected of being deviant from the masculine ideal. As a result, reason has been regarded as the essential faculty for the acquisition of knowledge whereas emotion as theoretically and essentially subversive of knowledge.¹⁴ Typically, the rational has been contrasted with emotional in the prevailing conventions that maintain and promote reason-based rationality rather than emotion-based. Adversely, feminist epistemic thinking encounters a dilemma whether to adhere to the conventions or to defy because their adherence to the conventions would be continuing the masculine tradition of knowing things and their defiance would be undertaking a risk for being unnoticed and demeaned. It is therefore argued, that an epistemology that excludes emotions in the acquisition of knowledge not only downplay the significance of emotion in knowing things but it also completely challenges women’s epistemic authority.

Women understand and learn things by and through experiencing emotional and sympathetic situations that not only prompts them to act rationally and intellectually, but also enables them to choose and repeat those acts that follow universalistic consequences. Not only women, human beings as a whole, develop and mature in emotions; they increase the range,

¹⁴Alisson M. Jaggar and Susan R. Bordo, *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1989, 145.

diversity and sensitivity of their emotional responses compliant with their life experiences. Emotion is an indispensable part of human life and without it, human life would be unthinkable. However, some emotions are neither agreeable nor even justifiable such as contempt, disgust, shame, revulsion, or fear as it may constraint analysis of certain situations or phenomena. For example, angry or extremely sad people often seem to be unaware of their surroundings and their own conditions; in such situations they may fail to listen or misinterpret what other people say.¹⁵

Nevertheless, certain emotions are appropriate and has the potential and relevance in a both moral and epistemological sense. Dewey proposed emotions like 'resentment' and 'affection' to justify the role of emotion in knowing and understanding certain things. He illustrates that 'resentment,' "ranging from fierce abhorrence through disgust to mild repugnance," is required to apprehend evil; similarly 'affection,' "ranging from intense love to mild favour," is essentially important to understand the worth and the consequences of actions. He placed emotion as a necessary part of human condition, noting that "emotional reactions form the chief materials of our knowledge of ourselves and of others."¹⁶ It is thus deduced, that some emotions have significant place in knowing, and emotions cannot be completely excluded from epistemology. Concerning feminine epistemology a collaborative research conducted by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule demonstrate that women's knowing takes place and comes in form through their participation in social context and within the relations. Their collective research develops five categories of epistemological perspectives supported by women whom they interviewed.

Silence is an epistemological position in which women experience themselves as mindless and voiceless and the mouthpiece of authority. They lack self-awareness, consciousness and their cognizance of social importance pushed them into the

¹⁵Jaggar and Bordo, *Gender/Body/Knowledge*, 155.

¹⁶John Dewey, *The Essential Dewey, Volume 11: Ethics, Logic, Psychology*, eds. L. Hickman and T. Alexandra, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005, 332.

position of silence; *subjective knowledge* is the position in which women conceive truth and knowledge as of personal and private and they subjectively know or intuit; *received knowledge* is the position in which women find themselves capable of acquiring and reproducing knowledge from external authority; however they are not in a position of constructing or creating knowledge on their own; *procedural knowledge* is present where women are invested in learning and applying objective ways of obtaining and communicating knowledge; it involves conscious and logical thinking. It comprises of two forms of knowing, *separate knowing* and *connected knowing*; *separate knowing* involves critical thinking in which separate knowers would remain detached; *connected knowing* chiefly aims to understand and view things from other's perspective or in the other's terms; *constructed knowledge* is the position that allows women to view all knowledge as contextual. They become capable of creating new knowledge and placing value on subjective as well as objective approaches for knowing.¹⁷

This empirical study shows that women's experiences are the valuable source of their knowledge. They construct knowledge by accumulating the parts of their experience that gradually progresses from silence to knowledge construction. Among all, the category of procedural knowledge involves procedures that are critically significant in the understanding of epistemology in terms of gender and the epistemological development of women. In this epistemological position women encounter various situations that facilitate in giving reasons to their knowledge. For example, in the procedural knowledge women's previous knowledge gets challenged when they encounter new situations; conflict arises between the dictates of the authorities and their subjective positions that attempts to suppress their inner voices; the availability of benevolent and knowledgeable authorities help them to develop their episteme critically. They gradually recognize that knowledge requires careful observation and systematic analysis and they acquire and apply procedures for gaining and communicating knowledge. This category of

¹⁷Belenky, et al., *Women's Ways of Knowing*, 17-20.

knowing comprises of 'separate knowing' and 'connected knowing'.

The content of separate knowing includes objectivity, detachment and evaluation whereas connected knowing involves emotions and feelings. Moreover connected knowing entails attentive, deliberative and imaginative in its process, in which knowers see things from others' perspectives and refrain from doubting; indeed they empathetically listen and understand others. Separate knowing is strongly juxtaposed to connected knowing mainly because the content of separate knowing involves masculine traits and connected knowing involves feminine traits. However, this categorizing of knowing procedure seems ambiguous because separate knowing takes place not without the context of connected knowing, and it cannot be vice versa. Apparently, separate knowing advocates the dismissal of self in the procedure of knowing, but it is argued that the knowing procedure undeniably involves getting inside what the knower tries or wants to understand. Moreover, any knowing of human being cannot occur without such involvement even if the knowers engage their epistemic procedure objectively. For example, a teacher objectively involves herself or himself with students through mutual interaction so that she or he could know their current academic position related to particular topic or subject. Such objective knowing of students is certainly required so that the teacher could commence teaching from that point. Such an epistemology requires teachers to refrain themselves from any interpersonal relation because they are to uphold the position of knowledge authority and personal involvement might obstruct the production of expected knowledge distracting the academic goal. In this respect, separate knowing undeniably requires the essential epistemic context and preface of the connected knowing or it may be said that separate knowing is partially dependent on connected knowing. However, connected knowing always takes place within its own framework and is more demonstrative, normative and paradigmatic. For example, in this category teachers actively engage themselves with students through mutual interaction; construct interpersonal relations and

advocate learning with the collaboration of students. They uphold their position as learners as well as teachers and engage themselves in knowing not only the current academic status of students but also understanding students as a whole so that they could modify their teaching practice respectively. In this regard, it would be relevant to state that separate and connected knowing is not embedded in gender but in epistemology.

However, gender has some linkage in the production and advancement of knowledge of both men and women. The process of gender identification has a phenomenal significance in knowledge construction of an individual. This conception is explicitly illustrated by Nancy Chodorow¹⁸ who asserts that mothers play an important role in gender identity development. Considering psychoanalytic perspective Chodorow distinguishes mother's response to her sons from her response to her daughters. She notes that a mother is likely to see herself as different and separate to her sons because they are of opposite sex while she experiences a sense of oneness and continuity with her daughter because of the same gender. As a result, boy gradually shifts his attention away from his mother and toward his father and learns masculinity whereas girls develops strong bonding with her mother and learns feminine attributes. Male gender identification processes place emphasis on identification from others, the repudiation of emotional relationships and categorical universalistic elements of male roles whereas feminine identification processes stresses on connectedness and the continuation of relationships. It is thus argued that knowledge takes place in gender identification of an individual in the socio-cultural context. For instance, men socially hold the positions of power and control and make all the key decisions¹⁹ that directly mediate their epistemological development. Masculine epistemologies are reparations for the deductive nature of parenthood. They reduce pre-oedipal subject/object mutuality to post oedipal causality, engaging idealistic and materialistic

¹⁸Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, 166-167.

¹⁹Martin Slattery, *Key Ideas in Sociology*, London: Nelson Thornes, 2003, 159.

rationales to compensate for the suppressed identification that the boy has experienced with his mother (primary object). The achievement of masculine gender requires male child to repress his pre-oedipal identification with his mother and to separate this primary object from his own conscious ego identity. He perceives that his mother is different, and his sense of gender is introduced through the forms of enculturation of his culture's sense of masculinity, a conceptual intersection that underpins his way of understanding, that his subjectivity (that pre-oedipal maternal identification) and objectivity (that primary object mother) are distanced from each other.²⁰ Thus, masculine epistemological beliefs involve objectivity, detachment, reason, rationality, autonomy and denial of emotion. On the contrary, feminine epistemology consists of connectedness, subjectivity, emotion and interdependency. It basically involves the knowing of communal as well as personal and affirms the significance of embodiment, diversity, gender, emotions, personal knowledge of others, etc.

Feminine knowing encompasses embodiment, specifically the ability of reproducing and mothering represent a distinct understanding and a particular way of perceiving things.²¹ The process of mothering or the state of motherhood for women is an identity that fundamentally confirms their epistemic effort. In the old days it is experienced as women's destiny but today it is subject to women's choice. Women as mothers remarkably perform their maternal work, they reflect, represent and get into the child's mind. Accordingly, they endeavour to simulate different social roles in order to communicate, understand, motivate, cooperate and help children grow and learn. They naturally internalised the capacity to hold child's anxiety, and manages the dynamic changes occurring in mothering process.

It demands of woman her highest endeavour, the broadest culture, the most complete command of herself, and the understanding of her resources and environments. It demands of her that she become a physician, an artist, a teacher, a poet, a

²⁰Grumet, *Bitter Milk*, 17-18.

²¹Miller-McLemore, "Epistemology or Bust," 231.

philosopher, a priest. In turn, it gives her an insight into science, into history, into art, into literature, into human nature.²²

Managing such responsibilities requires women to accept the patterns of work that are arduous and distinct in nature. Probably, the efficiency of handling multiple tasks enables women to provide care genuinely and distinctly. Not only this, it is also a continual changing phenomena, and caring in such fluctuating situation necessitates women to develop adaptive features to respond positively to those varying conditions. It benefits women in manifold ways: they learn about distinct individualities, their needs and requirements; they empathize with others; they tend to change their behaviours (if required) and so on. Mothering involves natural (not always), sentimental and emotional attachment between mother and child within the familial context. The adaptable and caring nature within the domain of motherhood advances epistemic thinking in women.

However, besides the biological mother, the practice of mothering can be efficiently learnt and carried out by nurses, care takers or even male members of the society. It is argued that the acquisition of maternal knowing can be supposedly learned through observation and imitation. Human beings belong to a society and they learn and practice things not always by physical engagement but by observing and emulating. Mothering is a practice that exclusively occurs within the social context. The philosophical account of Wittgenstein upholds that any form of learning and understanding takes place within forms of life.²³ The participation within a form of life offers various opportunities in understanding certain rules, limits and relevance of that practice. By participating, an individual develops an insight to distinguish and choose whether to learn or follow that practice. Indeed,

²²Elizabeth Harrison, *A Study of Child-Nature: From the Kindergarten Standpoint*, Chicago: The Lakeside Press, 1895, 11.

²³Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958, 23. Cited in Morwenna Griffiths, “The Feminisation of Teaching and the Practice of Teaching: Threat or Opportunity?” *Educational Theory* 56, 4 (November 2006), 387-405.

human beings belong to a society and any individual practice is a form of life that an individual actively seeks to learn or actively resists it. Hence, mothering is a social activity that can be effectively practiced by men and non-mothers through observation and simulation.

Despite the fact that mothering can be learnt and practiced by both the genders the belief that women are naturally well equipped in mothering still continues. Indeed, the socio-cultural aspects uphold that learning and practicing feminine traits is a matter of great apprehension for some men and their masculinity.²⁴ However, the roles and identities of women are gradually changing within the changing gender relations. As a result, the term 'mothering' is gradually shifted to parenting.²⁵ In this respect, caring and mothering is not gender specific and is thought to be an appropriate epistemological mode because it generates a specific kind of knowledge, a knowledge of care.

Caring underscores the understanding and significance of emotional bonding, thinking in collaboration, particularity of individual children and so on. According to Nel Noddings, the foundation of caring is based on relational bonding without which authentic caring could not be conveyed to care-receiver.²⁶ She further suggests that caring requires an initiation of particular kind of mutual relationship based on trust between care-giver and care-receiver because care giving actions necessarily depend on the quality of caring relations. In such caring relations care-giver concerns for the well-being of others as well as of self because human beings are born in relations and owing to these relationships they pursue their selfhood in association with others. However, Bubeck argues that care giving action is exclusively other directed, that caring is only caring, when a person intends to care for other, he initializes action to satisfy

²⁴Niall Hanlon, *Masculinities, Care and Equality: Identity and Nurture in Men's Lives*, Ireland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

²⁵Wendy Hollway, *The Capacity to Care: Gender and Ethical Subjectivity*, New York: Routledge, 2006, 83.

²⁶Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, London: University of California Press, 1984, 180-186.

others' need; hence he/she could not meet oneself.²⁷ The care theorists such as Joan Tronto, Berenice Fisher, Virginia Held, and Grace Clement critiqued the viewpoint of Bubeck and suggested that caring is the inclusion of "our bodies ourselves."²⁸

Care theory advocates the well-being of others, and directing oneself to care for others is not the selflessness or denial of self, but is the pursuit of 'selfhood'.²⁹ For example, when a mother cares and helps her baby to grow, she is not treating the baby as other individual rather she views the baby as a part of herself. Moreover, human beings are relational beings, they become human through assistance and association with others. An action becomes selfish when a person ignores the interests of others; for example, if a mother withholds and stops caring for her child for the sake of her professional advancement.³⁰ Care for one's own health, efficiency, progress in learning is not bad just because it is one's own; it is a moral duty to look after oneself. When people give care their interests are intertwined with the person they care for.³¹

In academics, caring involves critical development and educational value. Teaching work demands teachers to convey particular topic or concept to students, to ensure academic success of all students, to comprehend distinct individualities of each student, to take out their latent abilities and qualities, and so on. The absence of such caring and mutual relation between teacher

²⁷Diemut Elisabeth Bubeck, *Care, Gender and Justice*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

²⁸Joan Tronto and Berenice Fisher, "Toward a Feminist Theory of Caring," in *Circle of Care: Work and Identity in Women's Lives*, eds., Emily K. Abel and Margaret K. Nelson, New York: Oxford University Press 1990. Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. Grace Clement, *Care, Autonomy and Justice: Feminism and the Ethic of Care*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1996. Cited in Tony Monschinsky, *Education in Hope: Critical Pedagogies and the Ethic of Care*, New York: Peter Lang, 2010, 88.

²⁹Dewey, *The Essential Dewey, Volume 11*, 349.

³⁰Rout E. Groenhout and Marya Brewar, *Philosophy Feminism and Faith*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003, 155.

³¹Held, *The Ethics of Care*, 12.

and student may constrain student's cognitive growth, their emotional development and the development of self-esteem. At this juncture, it is worth noting that caring in maternal work involves emotional attachment between mother and child within the familial context. While caring in academics the students are the children of other women and to understand their needs and requirements require the mastery in caring along with the capacity to care. In relation to this, Noddings affirms that the experience of natural caring facilitates women to develop ethical sentiments that eventually motivate them to develop a capacity to care for others.³² There might be some woman teachers who probably had a different kind of experience in their past. For instance, she might be deprived of love and care in her childhood or she might have submitted to her mother's wishes out of the apprehension of punishment instead of reward. This type of experience generates a kind of desire and guides their behaviour to repay for that loss. Contrary to the first kind of loving teacher, she loves her students not only for the sake of being loved by them, but also for achieving restitutive gratification to provide students with love which was once denied to her.³³ She intends to care consistently because she does not want her students to experience what she has experienced earlier. It is also however probable that she might repeat the mistake and withhold love and care. Care giving action initializes an ethical sentiment that guides teachers' behaviour to act in such a way that is both ethically and professionally accepted. Caring in teaching undeniably demands teachers to develop emotional relation with students so that the teachers could feel, think and empathize with their students especially when students need them.

Accordingly, care-givers concentrate on developing empathy, and listen with full attention to care-receiver to meet their expressed needs. Thus, the knowledge of care proposes caring insights that give liberty to teachers to form emotional and relational association including educational relationship with

³²Noddings, *Caring*, 79.

³³Benjamin Wright and Barbara Sherman, "Who Is the Teacher?" *Theory into Practice* 2, 2 (1963), 71.

students. In this respect, the knowledge of care has a great significance in academics because it entails a moral obligation for the welfare of the students to which educator is committed. Caring in teaching not only leads toward professional satisfaction but also internal peace and for the maintenance of it she would continue caring for students.

Furthermore, caring in academics does not signify that the care-giver should respond positively to every expressed needs of care-receiver. Indeed, it suggests that the expressed needs of care-receiver should be assessed before providing care and should be denied if found not genuine. This caring action not only maintains the value of care but it also facilitates in making decisions for the welfare of the students. Thus, caring involves continuous reflection on the part of care-giver that gradually leads to ethical professional caring. The commitment to care for and care about students is central in pedagogy. This is not to say that teachers must always be friendly to their students for the sake of being nice. Indeed, they sometimes remain strict (if required) toward their students so that they (teachers) can discipline and engage them in learning. Such type of caring requires teachers to begin with attentive knowledge of students' progressive and proximal relations. This attentiveness is termed as 'engrossment'³⁴ in the work of Noddings.³⁵ The process of engrossment involves the temporary displacement of personal emotions of teachers so that they could receive and provide care to the student. However, engrossment in caring is only half of the story; caring would only be completed or received if students respond positively for that caring. The receiving of care is reflected in students' generous behaviour in the classroom, punctuality, excellence in academics, positive attitude towards learning; hence these are viewed as responses to caring. Thus, the positive responses from students motivate teachers to care further and in a consistent manner.

³⁴Engrossment is the state through which the care-giver in the interest of care-receiver temporarily suspends his/her emotion to attend and receive the needs of the care-receiver so that care could be genuinely conveyed to the same.

³⁵Noddings, *Caring*, 74.

Teachers' consistent practice of caring either within the context of family or educational institution gradually becomes their habit of caring or the disposition to care. In this conception, Dewey's theory of habit advocates that care is the product of repetitive performance because it concerns with those performances that are experienced previously with positive response. "The essence of habits is an acquired predisposition to ways or modes of responses, not particular act ... Habit means special sensitiveness or accessibility to certain classes of stimuli, standing predilections and aversions rather than bare recurrence of specific acts."³⁶

The positive consequences of caring acts that have been experienced previously motivate giving care in a repetitive manner. The repetitive practice of care gradually constitutes the habits of caring that over time instantiate our moral sense. In this manner, caring is envisioned as an extension of capacities acquired through performing caring actions repeatedly that eventually constitute the moral selves of individuals.³⁷ Thus, caring for others leads to one's moral identities that eventually motivate toward further caring. This habit of caring generates the ability and possibility to care for other's children that is regarded as the most serious and promising commitment of pedagogy. Such knowledge of caring enables teachers to care effectively in the context of teaching, thus genuine, consistent and reflective caring gradually becomes ethical caring.

The knowledge of caring facilitates teachers to offer partial preference to certain individuals that might not be justifiable in other professions as it may encourage favouritism. Apparently, treating all students equally is a matter of injustice because all students have distinct abilities and learning abilities and considering all of them in a calculated sense is to ignore their individualities. Aristotle in his *Politics* asserts that treating

³⁶John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology*, New York, Modern Library, 1922, 42.

³⁷Maurice Hamington, "Loyalty to Care: Royce and Political Approach to Feminist Care Ethics," *Pragmatism Today* 5, 1 (2014), 2.

unequal people equally is no less than unjust treatment of them.³⁸ Caring advocates the practice of partiality; in academics it is justified because it attempts to treat unequal students unequally in terms of their distinct learning abilities, their diverse backgrounds and mental capacities. Knowledge of caring is thus one of the most important feminine epistemology that must be discussed and shared with educators, specifically male teachers with a view to implement it in pedagogy. Discussing and sharing of caring experience and its application to pedagogy would not only lead to the improvement in teaching practice but it would also be helpful for male educators if such knowledge is made accessible to them.

5. Feminine Pedagogy vis-à-vis Masculine Pedagogy

Masculine pedagogy is based on masculine epistemological framework that upholds the denial of emotion and objectivity in the epistemic process. Masculine epistemology pervades and affects the pedagogical practices; it consists of discipline, control, knowledge and authority, a labour process in terms of appraisal, accountability and effective management. It advocates emotional detachment with students, controls the class through the use of force and discipline and emphasizes on competence based teaching³⁹ that involves a fixed and rigid form of approach; that is to try and make 'one size fits all.' Such an approach falls short in recognizing the particularity and individuality of students in terms of academics and their diverse backgrounds. Regrettably, the dominance of masculinity in conventional schools coerced women teachers to actively participate and emulate such pedagogical practice for the continuation of their teaching career. Indeed, female teachers in the common schools are "Demanded order in the name of sweetness, compelled moral rectitude in the

³⁸Garrett Ward Sheldon, *Encyclopedia of Political Thought*, New York: Facts on Files, Inc. 2001, 87.

³⁹Chris Haywood and Mairtin Mc an Ghail, *Men and Masculinities: Theory Research and Social Practice*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 2003, 64.

name of recitation, citizenship in the name of silence, and asexuality in the name of manners."⁴⁰

This approach of teaching upholds the belief that an ideal teacher is one who could control the children and be controlled by their superiors.⁴¹ Moreover, masculinized authority pervades in contemporary schooling pattern that explicitly indicates that women teachers are promoting the masculinity within school. Indeed, women teachers are gradually becoming the reliable medium of transferring and maintaining the legacy of masculine pattern in schools. It is thus argued, that it not only sabotaged women's inherent feminine qualities but also forced them to maintain masculinity in schools. However, qualities like 'expressiveness', 'tenderness' and 'submissiveness' are acknowledged as specific feminine qualities⁴² required to build connection with students from both personal and professional fronts. Such qualities of teachers are highly desirable in academics because they enable them to make necessary modifications in their pedagogy as per the individual and distinct needs of the students. At this juncture, it is a matter of serious deliberation to create awareness concerning the significance and applicability of feminist pedagogy in the classroom setting.

Feminine pedagogy is grounded in feminist theory that critically examines reality and promotes alternatives to prevailing practices. It is a theory about the teaching-learning process that guides teachers' choice of classroom practices by offering criteria so that instructional strategies and skills could be assessed in terms of expected educational goals or outcomes.⁴³ Feminine pedagogy involves relational, and non-hierarchal form of instructional practice, promoting a positive relationship between

⁴⁰Grumet, *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching*, 44.

⁴¹Grumet, *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching*, 43.

⁴²A study of gender roles conducted in 1978 shows that qualities like expressiveness, tenderness and awareness of other feelings are the ideal and specific feminine qualities. See Francesca M. Cancian, "The Feminization of Love," *Signs*, 11, 4 (1986), 695.

⁴³Carolyn Shrewsbury, "What is Feminist Pedagogy?" *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 21, 3 & 4 (1993), 8-16.

student and teacher, and between student and student. Feminist scholars primarily seek to form connections as they see classroom a place, where students are connected in a network of relationships with people who care about each other's learning including their own. Such an approach promotes collaborative learning in which students work together toward a common academic goal. Collaborative learning facilitates students to develop cooperative and intellectual skills through positive interaction and interdependence within classroom members. It includes the autonomy and individuality of classroom members who share a sense of relationship and connectedness with each other. It includes teaching strategies that focuses on sharing of power in the process of learning in order to replace the traditional power relationships prevalent in contemporary teaching practice. In traditional classroom, the concept of power embodies relations of dominance that attempts to change or control others.

Shrewsbury notices that feminist pedagogy embodies a concept of power as energy, capacity and potential rather than domination.⁴⁴ This perspective of power provides opportunity to act; to change the learning conditions, for the benefit of maximum number of people.⁴⁵ Feminine pedagogy emphasizes on the understanding of students that serves the basis of multidimensional and positional view of the knowledge construction in the classroom. It also includes an ethic of care that values difference in its content and deduces that the articulation of care in the methods of pedagogy would certainly allow teachers to bring the understandings of the complex, sustained and exciting labour of caring to the instructional technique. Moreover, it attempts to ameliorate the conditions of women who are involved in the educational activities.

Over the time, this feminine methodology of teaching was mistakenly interpreted and confronted with several criticisms within academy. Primarily, feminine pedagogy were critiqued for

⁴⁴Shrewsbury, "What is Feminist Pedagogy?" 10.

⁴⁵Ann Lane, "The Feminism of Hannah Arendt," *Democracy* 3, 3(1983), 107-17.

being girl-centred⁴⁶ and maintained the impression that boy students possess less academic abilities that eventually arose problems for them in terms of 'motivation', 'discipline' and 'social interaction'.⁴⁷ As a result, the feminized methodology of teaching underwent a huge discourse in the media that it favours girls and is largely responsible for boys' underachievement in academics.⁴⁸ Griffiths argued that popular articles and speeches wrongly reported that the feminine instructional method causes negative impacts on boy students.⁴⁹ Research evidence proves that boy students are not disadvantaged by being taught by women teachers.⁵⁰ Though gender might have some influence in the ways of teaching or in the maintenance of discipline and order within the institution, these seem to be irrelevant to academic levels. Conversely, feminist theory explicitly insists on lived experiences that serve the basis of analysis and research.⁵¹ Feminist research encompasses in understanding diverse social factors like gender, race, class, and ethnicity⁵² that offers flexible and appropriate instructional technique. Diversity in this sense, seems to be an important feature of feminist theory. Indeed, feminist pedagogy offers a concept of liberatory classroom in which students learn to respect each other's differences and uniqueness instead of fearing them⁵³ or even demeaning them. Students' unique personal experiences based on diverse background tend to replace fear

⁴⁶Elina Lahelma, "Lack of Male Teachers: Problem for Students or Teachers?" *Pedagogy, Culture and Society* 8, 2 (2000), 173-186.

⁴⁷Sara Delamont, "Gender and the Discourse of Derision," *Research Papers in Education* 14, 1 (1999), 3-21.

⁴⁸Fatihma Kelleher, *Women and the Teaching Profession: Exploring the Feminization Debate*, Commonwealth Secretariat and UNESCO, 2011, 18, 141.

⁴⁹Griffiths, "The Feminisation of Teaching," 398-402.

⁵⁰Kelleher, *Women and the Teaching Profession*, 141.

⁵¹Karena Foss and Sonja Foss, "Personal Experience as Evidence in Feminist Scholarship," *Western Journal of Communication* 58 (1994) 39-43.

⁵²Shirley Parry, "Feminist Pedagogy and Techniques for the Changing Classroom," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 24, 3 & 4 (1996), 45-54.

⁵³Shrewsbury, "What is Feminist Pedagogy?" 8.

with respect. These experiences of students allow them to view things in different lights, to relate those experiences to other or new evidence, and to think about those experiences in different ways. Such kind of environment within classroom modifies past understandings and leads towards a new learning. It is on this ground, feminist pedagogy validates personal experience⁵⁴ and confirms it as a central component of learning.⁵⁵

6. Conclusion

Personal experience of life and learning enable women to acquire specialized knowledge, a knowledge of accommodating the atmosphere of home or the reliability and specificity of mother/child relationship to school. "Knowledge of women' experience of reproduction and nurturance into the epistemological systems and curricular forms that constitute the discourse and practice of public education."⁵⁶

It encourages the maintenance of human relationships in order to initiate academic relationship. Besides, it empowers teachers to maintain balance between their personal and professional roles. The implementation of such knowledge of pedagogy would eventually lead toward intimacy, develop trust, support the risks, and encourage those expressions that are conducive for learning. It is therefore acknowledged that there is a close connection between maternal discourse and teaching that empowers women to perform both these responsibilities efficiently since the experience of each segments influence the other.⁵⁷ However, in contrary to this, the professional belief upholds that discussing personal life or experience in the course of practicing professional work is against the codes of profession. It is held in the professional pedagogy that the personal life has less significance compared to professional life because profession is more exalted and transcends the merely personal. The necessary condition to be

⁵⁴Ernest Chapman, "Nurse Education: A Feminist Approach," *Nurse Education Today* 17, 3 (1997), 209-214.

⁵⁵Parry, "Feminist Pedagogy and Techniques," 47.

⁵⁶Grumet, *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching*, 3.

⁵⁷Grumet, *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching*, 96.

purely professional is to adhere to the conventions, which would uphold masculine standards of rationality that is recognized as culturally authentic medium of professional practice. Women are not supposed to accommodate their personal epistemology to professional work (also pedagogy) because it is believed that exhibiting feminine feelings or attitudes are 'soft-minded', 'self-indulgent' and 'unprofessional'. The irony of the situation is that women do not have the authority to create moral principles either at home or work place but they are expected to be one of the reliable media through which the patriarchal patterns such as laws, language, and rules and so on are communicated to the young ones.⁵⁸ Women are subordinated to men in the family and the school and their voices are muted. Feminine caring experiences have great significance in the pedagogical practice because they offer alternative ways of thinking that positively shapes their personal as well as professional beliefs. As Froebel observed:

The destiny of the nations lies far more in the hands of women — the mothers—than in the hands of those who possess power, or those who are innovators, who seldom understand themselves. We must cultivate women, who are the educators of the human race, else a new generation cannot accomplish its task.⁵⁹

The feminine epistemology must be taken into account not only in the formal pedagogical practice but also to acknowledge and encourage feminine contribution in forming and sustaining social relationships. The incorporation of feminist epistemology has great significance in pedagogical practice and has efficiency not only in the improvement of quality education but also for the promotion of a just and compassionate society.

⁵⁸Grumet, *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching*, 84.

⁵⁹Elizabeth Harrison, *A Study of Child-Nature*, 10-11.