# Ballet Education for the Web 2.0 Generation:
## A Case for Using YouTube to Teach Elementary-School-Aged Ballet Students

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## ABSTRACT

Today's elementary-school-aged ballet students were born in the era of Web 2.0. Their everyday lives are significantly engaged with digital technology. Though scholars have addressed related topics, no one has looked at how ballet can be taught to the Web 2.0 generation using twenty-first-century technologies. The purpose of this article is to help fill that gap in the literature. This author first, calls for a shift in the pedagogical approach to teaching elementary-school-aged students ballet; next, suggests incorporating student-generated time-lapse, tutorial, fan review and commentary, and reaction YouTube videos; then, argues that this cross-pollinated approach could help teachers develop specific skills in students, while also extending existing research on twenty-first-century technology as it relates to cultural identity, pedagogical approaches in arts education, and other pedagogical approaches.

## KEYWORDS

## INTRODUCTION

Today's elementary-school-aged ballet students were born in or just before the era of Web 2.0. Their everyday lives are significantly engaged with digital technology. Though contemporary choreographers and educators that work with professional ballet dancers incorporate twenty-first-century technologies like video, social media, and computer-generated content in their work, the use of twenty-first-century technologies in elementary-school-aged ballet students' classrooms is limited. Yet, there are other educational settings—including other dance education settings—where twenty-first-century technologies have been healthfully integrated. Cultural norms in ballet might make this pedagogical approach difficult to practice. Still, what might happen if we attempted cross-pollination?

Though scholars have addressed related topics, no one has looked at how an ancestral dance form like ballet can be passed onto the next generation using twenty-first-century technologies—i.e., the technologies the next generation has been surrounded by as they grew—and the advances in pedagogical practice that have been made during that generation's lifetime. The purpose of this chapter is to help fill that gap in the literature.

In what follows, this author calls for a shift in the pedagogical approach to teaching elementary-school-aged students ballet. The writer suggests the shift be initiated through rigorous study on how incorporating twenty-first century technology—in particular, student-generated YouTube videos—in elementary-school-aged ballet students' classrooms can be fruitful. The author grounds her stance on four reasons. First, doing so could help ballet teachers develop specific, necessary skills in their students. Second, doing so would extend existing research on twenty-first century technology as it relates to cultural identity. Third, this approach could extend existing research on twenty-first century technology in relation to pedagogical approaches outside of arts education. Fourth, doing this could extend existing research on twenty-first century technology in relation to pedagogical approaches in arts education.

This author begins this article with a review of relevant contributions to the academic literature on topics related to her area of focus, i.e., cultural identity, creative pedagogy, the use of YouTube in classrooms, and the use of twenty-first-century technology in dance. After engaging with these contributions to the academic literature, the author points out that, by contrast with the contexts just mentioned, no significant effort has been made to incorporate twenty-first century technology in elementary-school-aged ballet students' classrooms.

In response, this writer claims that the pedagogical approach to ballet should take its cue from other fields of study; it is time to shift. This writer suggests the shift be initiated through rigorous study of how to incorporate twenty-first century technology—in particular, student-generated YouTube videos. As this author presents her claim, she makes two key specifications. First, the study should focus on cases where, even though the ballet curriculum was designed and taught by an instructor, students generated—i.e., curated, cast, performed, recorded, edited, uploaded—their YouTube videos. Second, the study should involve YouTube video styles that have potential to elicit the desirable pedagogical qualities described above: student-centered; constructivist; emphasizing guided reflection; incorporating a digital component; creative; developed with the roles of teacher, student, and viewer mindfully considered; drawn from other pedagogical advances in related areas; and augmenting, instead of diluting, the ballet community's identity.

With these specifications in mind, this author states that the YouTube videos best suited to encourage a pedagogical shift in ballet for elementary-school-aged students are Time-lapse, Tutorial, Fan Review and Commentary, and Reaction. Then, to support her statement, this writer analyzes these four YouTube video styles. For each, she shows how, if cross-pollinated with long-standing pedagogical approaches in ballet, the YouTube style could help teachers develop specific, necessary skills in their students while also extending existing research on twenty-first century technology as relates to cultural identity, pedagogical approaches outside of arts education, and pedagogical approaches in arts education.

At the close of this article, this author reiterates her call for a shift in the pedagogical approach to ballet instruction for elementary-school-aged students. Further, she suggests once again that the shift be initiated through rigorous study on how incorporating twenty-first century technology—in particular, student-generated YouTube videos, in elementary-school-aged ballet students' classrooms can be fruitful.

## BACKGROUND

### Cultural Identity

Sun Huizhu (2009) has discussed a shift in the Chinese educational system and thus provided useful perspective on a real-world situation where interest in maintaining traditional identity parallels effort to beat the forefront of trends (p. 7–11). Huizhu claimed, "for people to feel rooted in their cultural identity, itis important to find traditional cultural elements that are still relevant and practicable" (p. 7). Annette de Stecher (2017) made similar points in an article about how the Wendat First Nation

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