



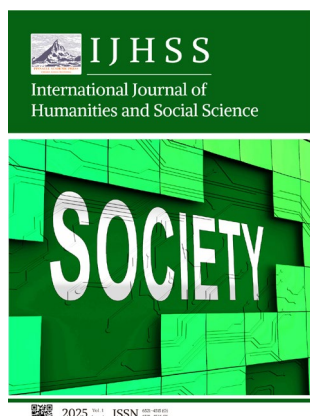
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# Cultural Influences on Ballet Pedagogy across Different International Schools

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**Abstract:** The globalization of ballet education has resulted in diverse pedagogical approaches that reflect cultural values, historical contexts, and educational philosophies across different international schools. This study examines how cultural influences shape ballet pedagogy in various national contexts, analyzing the evolution from traditional European models to contemporary multicultural approaches. Through systematic analysis of pedagogical methods employed in major ballet institutions worldwide, this research identifies significant variations in teaching methodologies, curriculum design, and student-teacher relationships that emerge from cultural foundations. The study reveals that while technical foundations remain universal, the delivery, interpretation, and contextual framing of ballet education vary considerably across cultures. European schools maintain traditional hierarchical structures emphasizing technical precision, while North American institutions increasingly adopt democratic pedagogical approaches. Asian ballet schools demonstrate unique synthesis of Western classical techniques with indigenous cultural values, creating hybrid pedagogical models. African and Latin American contexts show strong emphasis on community-based learning and cultural integration. The findings suggest that culturally responsive ballet pedagogy enhances student engagement and creates more inclusive learning environments while maintaining artistic excellence. This research contributes to understanding how cultural diversity enriches ballet education and provides framework for developing culturally sensitive pedagogical approaches in international ballet training programs.

**Keywords:** ballet pedagogy; cultural influences; international schools; dance education; multicultural approaches; pedagogical methods

## 1. Introduction

Ballet pedagogy has undergone significant transformation as this classical art form has spread across diverse cultural contexts worldwide. The traditional European model of ballet training, established through centuries of development in France, Italy, and Russia, now encounters various cultural interpretations and adaptations as ballet schools proliferate globally [1]. This cultural diversification of ballet education presents both opportunities and challenges for maintaining artistic standards while embracing local values and educational philosophies.

The evolution of ballet pedagogy reflects broader educational paradigm shifts toward culturally responsive teaching methods and inclusive practices [2]. Contemporary ballet educators increasingly recognize that effective pedagogy must acknowledge and integrate students' cultural backgrounds while preserving the technical rigor essential to

classical ballet training. This recognition has led to innovative approaches that blend traditional European methods with indigenous cultural practices and contemporary educational theories [3].

Cultural influences on ballet pedagogy manifest in multiple dimensions including teaching methodologies, student-teacher relationships, curriculum design, assessment practices, and institutional structures. These influences reflect deeper cultural values regarding authority, individualism versus collectivism, learning styles, and artistic expression [4]. Understanding these cultural variations is crucial for developing effective international ballet education programs and fostering cross-cultural exchange in dance education [5].

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform ballet educators about culturally responsive pedagogical strategies that can enhance learning outcomes while respecting diverse cultural contexts. As ballet education continues to expand globally, understanding how culture shapes pedagogical approaches becomes essential for maintaining both artistic excellence and cultural sensitivity [6].

## 2. Traditional European Ballet Pedagogy

### 2.1. Historical Foundations and Methodological Frameworks

European ballet pedagogy emerged from centuries of court traditions and academic institutions that established fundamental principles still governing classical ballet training today. The French school, originating in the court of Louis XIV, emphasized elegance, precision, and codified positions that became universal ballet vocabulary [4]. This systematic approach created structured curricula progressing from basic positions through complex variations, establishing hierarchical learning sequences that remain influential in contemporary ballet education.

The Russian Vaganova method and Italian Cecchetti technique further refined European pedagogical approaches, each emphasizing different aspects of technical development and artistic expression. These methods demonstrate how cultural values influence pedagogical priorities, with Russian training emphasizing dramatic expression and Italian technique focusing on virtuosic precision [7]. The systematic nature of European methods reflects broader cultural values regarding discipline, tradition, and institutional authority that characterize European educational systems.

European ballet schools traditionally maintain strict hierarchical relationships between teachers and students, reflecting cultural norms regarding respect for authority and expertise [8]. This pedagogical structure emphasizes teacher-centered instruction, where master teachers transmit knowledge through demonstration, correction, and repetition. Students are expected to absorb instruction passively and demonstrate progress through precise imitation of prescribed techniques and movements.

The comparison of major European pedagogical approaches reveals subtle but significant cultural variations as shown in Table 1. These differences reflect how national cultures influence ballet training priorities and methodologies while maintaining core classical principles.

**Table 1.** Comparative Analysis of Major European Ballet Pedagogical Methods.

Method	Country of Origin	Primary Focus	Teaching Style	Assessment Approach
French School	France	Elegance and Grace	Formal Demonstration	Technical Precision
Vaganova	Russia	Dramatic Expression	Systematic Progression	Artistic Development
Cecchetti	Italy	Technical Virtuosity	Structured Sequences	Methodical Evaluation

RAD	England	Accessibility	Progressive Syllabus	Standardized Testing
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## 2.2. Institutional Structures and Cultural Values

European ballet institutions reflect cultural values through their organizational structures, admission processes, and student development pathways. The Paris Opera Ballet School exemplifies French cultural emphasis on intellectual rigor and artistic refinement, maintaining highly selective admission standards and comprehensive academic integration alongside dance training [9]. This approach reflects French educational philosophy that values broad cultural knowledge and intellectual development alongside specialized artistic skills.

Russian ballet institutions demonstrate different cultural priorities, emphasizing collective achievement and state support for artistic excellence. The Bolshoi and Mariinsky academies maintain residential programs that create total immersion environments, reflecting Russian cultural values regarding dedication to artistic pursuits and community-based learning [10]. These institutions provide comprehensive support systems that enable students to focus entirely on ballet development, representing cultural commitment to artistic excellence as national priority.

The hierarchical nature of European ballet pedagogy extends beyond classroom instruction to encompass entire institutional cultures. Students progress through clearly defined levels with specific requirements and expectations at each stage [4]. This systematic progression reflects European cultural values regarding structured learning, earned advancement, and respect for established traditions and authorities.

European ballet pedagogy emphasizes technical mastery as foundation for artistic expression, reflecting cultural values that prioritize craftsmanship and perfectionism. Students spend years developing fundamental techniques before advancing to more complex artistic work, demonstrating cultural patience with long-term development processes [8]. This approach contrasts with cultures that emphasize immediate engagement and creative exploration from early stages of learning [11].

## 2.3. Contemporary Adaptations and Global Influence

Modern European ballet schools increasingly adapt traditional pedagogical approaches to accommodate contemporary educational theories and multicultural student populations. The Royal Academy of Dance has developed syllabi that maintain classical rigor while incorporating pedagogical innovations such as creative movement and student-centered learning activities [1]. These adaptations demonstrate how European institutions balance tradition preservation with contemporary educational needs.

European ballet methods continue to dominate international ballet education through franchise programs, teacher training initiatives, and institutional partnerships worldwide. The Vaganova method has been adopted by schools across Asia, Africa, and the Americas, often with local adaptations that reflect cultural preferences and values [2]. This global influence demonstrates the foundational importance of European pedagogy while highlighting the need for cultural sensitivity in international applications.

The evolution of European ballet pedagogy reflects broader cultural shifts toward more inclusive and democratic educational approaches. Traditional authoritarian teaching styles are gradually incorporating collaborative elements and student voice, though change occurs slowly due to strong institutional traditions [12]. These adaptations represent cultural negotiations between traditional values and contemporary educational philosophies that emphasize student agency and participatory learning.

Contemporary European ballet schools also increasingly recognize the importance of addressing diverse learning styles and cultural backgrounds among their students. Programs now include cultural awareness components and modified teaching approaches that accommodate different learning preferences while maintaining technical standards

[6]. This evolution demonstrates growing cultural competence within traditionally homogeneous European ballet institutions.

### 3. North American Approaches to Ballet Education

#### 3.1. Democratic Pedagogical Principles

North American ballet pedagogy reflects cultural values emphasizing democracy, individualism, and student-centered learning approaches that distinguish it from traditional European methods. American ballet schools increasingly adopt collaborative teaching styles that encourage student participation, creative input, and personal artistic development alongside technical mastery [12]. This approach represents fundamental cultural differences regarding authority relationships and learning processes in educational settings.

The integration of democratic principles in ballet pedagogy manifests through modified teacher-student relationships that emphasize mentorship rather than authoritarian instruction. Students are encouraged to ask questions, express individual interpretations, and participate actively in their learning processes [6]. This pedagogical shift reflects broader American educational values that prioritize critical thinking, self-expression, and personal growth alongside skill acquisition.

North American ballet institutions demonstrate greater flexibility in curriculum design and implementation compared to their European counterparts. Schools adapt pedagogical approaches to accommodate diverse learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and individual student needs while maintaining technical standards [1]. This adaptability reflects cultural values that emphasize innovation, pragmatism, and responsiveness to student populations rather than rigid adherence to traditional methods.

The emphasis on holistic student development characterizes North American ballet pedagogy, with schools providing comprehensive support systems that address academic, artistic, and personal growth needs. Table 2 illustrates the comparative emphasis placed on different pedagogical elements across North American ballet institutions.

**Table 2.** Pedagogical Emphasis in Major North American Ballet Schools.

Institution	Technical Training	Creative Development	Academic Integration	Individual Attention	Cultural Diversity
SAB	High	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium
Houston Ballet	High	High	Medium	High	High
Canada's NBS	High	Medium	High	High	High
ABT JLP	High	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium

#### 3.2. Multicultural Integration and Inclusive Practices

North American ballet schools increasingly recognize the importance of cultural diversity and implement inclusive pedagogical practices that honor different cultural backgrounds while maintaining classical ballet standards. These institutions develop programs that incorporate diverse movement vocabularies, cultural contexts, and learning styles to create more accessible and relevant ballet education [11]. This approach reflects broader North American values regarding multiculturalism and educational equity.

The integration of culturally responsive pedagogy in North American ballet education involves adapting teaching methods to accommodate different cultural learning preferences and communication styles. Educators recognize that students from various cultural backgrounds may respond differently to direct correction, competitive environments, or individual versus group-focused instruction [2]. These adaptations demonstrate cultural competence and commitment to inclusive educational practices.

North American ballet institutions also address historical exclusions and barriers that have limited access to ballet education for underrepresented communities. Schools implement outreach programs, scholarship opportunities, and modified pedagogical approaches designed to welcome and support students from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds [6]. These initiatives reflect cultural values that prioritize equality, access, and social justice in educational contexts.

The development of culturally inclusive ballet curricula involves incorporating diverse musical traditions, historical contexts, and artistic perspectives while maintaining classical technique requirements. Students learn about ballet's global development and contemporary relevance rather than focusing exclusively on European historical contexts [5]. This broader cultural framework enhances student engagement and creates more meaningful connections between classical training and contemporary artistic expression.

### 3.3. Innovation and Technological Integration

North American ballet pedagogy demonstrates leadership in incorporating technological innovations and contemporary educational tools to enhance traditional training methods. Schools utilize video analysis, online learning platforms, and digital resources to supplement traditional classroom instruction and provide additional learning opportunities [8]. This technological integration reflects cultural values that embrace innovation and efficiency in educational delivery.

The adoption of scientific approaches to ballet training characterizes many North American institutions, with schools incorporating biomechanical analysis, injury prevention protocols, and performance optimization techniques into their pedagogical frameworks. This evidence-based approach reflects cultural preferences for scientific validation and systematic improvement of educational methods [7]. Students benefit from more informed training approaches that reduce injury risk while optimizing performance development.

North American ballet schools also demonstrate innovation in assessment and evaluation methods, moving beyond traditional subjective assessments to include objective measures of technical progress, artistic development, and holistic growth. Table 3 presents the various assessment approaches employed across different North American ballet institutions.

**Table 3.** Assessment Methodologies in North American Ballet Education.

Assessment Type	Traditional Methods	Contemporary Adaptations	Technology Integration	Student Self-Assessment
Technical Skills	Teacher Observation	Video Analysis	Motion Capture	Progress Portfolios
Artistic Development	Performance Evaluation	Peer Review	Digital Documentation	Reflection Journals
Overall Progress	Annual Examinations	Continuous Assessment	Online Tracking	Goal Setting

The emphasis on student agency and self-directed learning characterizes contemporary North American ballet pedagogy, with schools providing resources and guidance that enable students to take greater responsibility for their artistic development. This approach contrasts with traditional models that rely primarily on teacher direction and external motivation [12]. Students develop critical thinking skills and artistic independence that prepare them for professional careers in increasingly diverse dance environments.



#### 4. Asian Ballet Schools and Cultural Synthesis

##### 4.1. Integration of Eastern and Western Pedagogical Philosophies

Asian ballet schools demonstrate unique approaches to classical training that synthesize Western technical requirements with indigenous cultural values and educational philosophies. These institutions create hybrid pedagogical models that maintain international ballet standards while incorporating cultural elements such as respect for teachers, collective learning approaches, and holistic artistic development [3]. This synthesis reflects broader Asian educational traditions that emphasize harmony, discipline, and long-term commitment to mastery.

The Chinese approach to ballet education exemplifies successful cultural synthesis through institutions like Beijing Dance Academy, which integrates classical ballet training with traditional Chinese dance elements and Confucian educational values. Students receive comprehensive training that includes technical ballet instruction alongside cultural education that contextualizes Western classical dance within broader artistic traditions [3]. This integrated approach creates culturally grounded artists who can navigate both classical and contemporary dance contexts.

Japanese ballet institutions demonstrate different synthesis strategies, incorporating concepts from traditional arts such as kata practice and mindful repetition into classical ballet training. The emphasis on perfect execution through repetitive practice aligns with both ballet requirements and Japanese cultural values regarding mastery through dedication [2]. Students develop exceptional technical precision while maintaining cultural connections to indigenous artistic traditions.

Korean ballet schools represent another synthesis model, combining Western pedagogical structures with Korean cultural emphasis on collective achievement and mutual support among students. Table 4 illustrates the distinctive characteristics of major Asian ballet pedagogical approaches and their cultural foundations.

**Table 4.** Cultural Synthesis in Asian Ballet Pedagogy.

Country	Cultural Integration	Teaching Philosophy	Student Relationships	Assessment Focus
China	Traditional Dance Elements	Confucian Respect	Hierarchical	Technical Mastery
Japan	Kata-Based Practice	Mindful Repetition	Individual Focus	Perfect Execution
Korea	Collective Learning	Mutual Support	Group Harmony	Holistic Development
Singapore	Multicultural Blend	Adaptive Methods	Diverse Integration	Flexible Standards

##### 4.2. Disciplinary Approaches and Student-Teacher Relationships

Asian ballet pedagogy maintains traditional hierarchical relationships between teachers and students while adapting these structures to incorporate contemporary educational insights. The concept of teacher as master and guide remains central to Asian ballet education, reflecting cultural values that emphasize respect for knowledge and expertise [9]. Students demonstrate reverence for teachers through formal behaviors, attentive listening, and diligent practice that extends beyond classroom requirements.

The disciplinary approach in Asian ballet schools emphasizes self-control, persistence, and incremental improvement through sustained effort. Students are encouraged to view challenges as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles to success, reflecting cultural philosophies that value perseverance and long-term development [10]. This approach creates resilient dancers who maintain motivation through difficult training periods and professional challenges.

Asian ballet institutions often implement mentorship systems that pair advanced students with beginners, creating learning communities that support collective development. These systems reflect cultural values regarding social responsibility and mutual aid while providing practical benefits for skill development and knowledge transfer [2]. Senior students develop leadership skills while junior students receive additional guidance and support beyond formal instruction.

The integration of mindfulness and mental training techniques distinguishes Asian ballet pedagogy from purely Western approaches. Students learn concentration methods, visualization techniques, and mental preparation strategies that enhance both technical execution and artistic expression [3]. These approaches reflect indigenous cultural traditions regarding mind-body integration and holistic development that complement Western technical training methods.

#### 4.3. Contemporary Developments and Global Engagement

Modern Asian ballet schools increasingly engage with international dance communities while maintaining distinctive cultural characteristics in their pedagogical approaches. Institutions participate in global competitions, exchange programs, and collaborative projects that expose students to diverse artistic perspectives while reinforcing home cultural foundations [8]. This international engagement enhances student preparation for global dance careers while preserving cultural identity.

The development of uniquely Asian contributions to ballet pedagogy includes innovations in injury prevention, mental training, and artistic interpretation that reflect cultural expertise in these areas. Asian schools contribute research and practical applications that enhance global ballet education through evidence-based approaches to training optimization [7]. These contributions demonstrate how cultural diversity enriches the overall field of ballet pedagogy.

Asian ballet institutions also demonstrate leadership in addressing the challenges of maintaining classical standards while adapting to contemporary educational needs and diverse student populations. Schools develop flexible curricula that accommodate different learning styles and cultural backgrounds while preserving essential technical requirements [1]. This balance reflects sophisticated understanding of both cultural sensitivity and artistic excellence requirements.

The economic development of Asian countries has enabled significant investment in ballet education infrastructure, creating world-class facilities and programs that compete internationally while serving regional needs. Table 5 presents the investment patterns and development priorities across major Asian ballet education markets.

**Table 5.** Investment and Development in Asian Ballet Education.

Region	Infrastructure Investment	Teacher Training	International Partnerships	Student Support Programs
East Asia	High	Extensive	Multiple	Comprehensive
Southeast Asia	Medium	Developing	Selective	Basic
South Asia	Low	Limited	Few	Minimal
Central Asia	Medium	Traditional	Regional	Government-Supported

## 5. Multicultural and Inclusive Pedagogical Innovations

### 5.1. Culturally Responsive Teaching Methods

Contemporary ballet pedagogy increasingly incorporates culturally responsive teaching methods that acknowledge and build upon students' diverse cultural back-

grounds and learning preferences. These approaches recognize that effective ballet education must adapt instructional strategies to accommodate different cultural communication styles, learning modalities, and motivational factors while maintaining rigorous technical standards [11]. Culturally responsive pedagogy enhances student engagement and achievement by creating connections between classical ballet training and students' lived experiences and cultural knowledge.

The implementation of culturally responsive methods involves modifying traditional teaching approaches to include diverse examples, contexts, and references that resonate with multicultural student populations. Ballet educators incorporate music from various cultural traditions, discuss the global development of ballet, and acknowledge diverse contributions to classical dance development [2]. These adaptations create more inclusive learning environments that validate students' cultural identities while expanding their artistic horizons.

Effective culturally responsive ballet pedagogy also addresses different cultural attitudes toward correction, competition, and individual versus group achievement. Educators learn to provide feedback in culturally sensitive ways that motivate rather than discourage students from different backgrounds [6]. Some cultures respond better to private correction rather than public feedback, while others thrive in competitive environments that might intimidate students from different cultural contexts.

The development of multicultural ballet curricula involves integrating diverse movement vocabularies and artistic traditions that complement rather than compete with classical training. Students explore how different cultures have adapted and interpreted ballet, creating broader understanding of the art form's global relevance and cultural flexibility [5]. This integration demonstrates how cultural diversity enhances rather than diminishes classical ballet education quality and relevance.

### *5.2. Democratic and Collaborative Learning Approaches*

Modern ballet pedagogy increasingly adopts democratic and collaborative learning approaches that engage students as active participants in their educational processes rather than passive recipients of instruction. These methods encourage student voice, creative input, and collaborative problem-solving while maintaining the discipline and rigor essential to classical ballet training [12]. Democratic pedagogy reflects broader educational shifts toward student-centered learning that recognizes learners as capable contributors to their own development.

Collaborative learning in ballet education involves peer teaching opportunities, group creative projects, and shared responsibility for classroom dynamics and learning outcomes. Students work together to analyze movement, provide constructive feedback, and support each other's development through structured partnership activities [6]. These approaches build communication skills, empathy, and leadership capabilities while reinforcing technical learning through explanation and demonstration.

The integration of student choice and decision-making opportunities characterizes democratic ballet pedagogy, with students participating in goal-setting, curriculum planning, and assessment processes appropriate to their developmental levels. This involvement creates greater investment in learning outcomes and develops critical thinking skills that enhance both artistic development and life preparation [1]. Students learn to evaluate their own progress, identify areas for improvement, and develop strategies for continued growth.

Democratic ballet pedagogy also addresses power dynamics inherent in traditional master-student relationships by creating more balanced interactions that maintain appropriate boundaries while encouraging student agency. Teachers serve as facilitators and guides rather than authoritarian directors, creating learning environments that foster cre-



ativity, risk-taking, and personal artistic development [12]. This approach requires sophisticated pedagogical skills that balance structure with flexibility and guidance with independence.

### 5.3. Technology Integration and Innovation

Contemporary ballet education increasingly incorporates technological innovations that enhance traditional pedagogical methods and create new learning opportunities for diverse student populations. Video analysis tools enable detailed examination of technique and progress tracking that supports individualized instruction and student self-assessment [8]. Students can review their own performances, compare with exemplary models, and identify specific areas for improvement through technological assistance.

Online learning platforms and digital resources expand access to ballet education for students in remote locations or with limited local opportunities. Virtual classes, instructional videos, and interactive learning modules provide supplementary training that complements face-to-face instruction [7]. These technological tools particularly benefit students from underserved communities who may lack access to high-quality local ballet instruction.

The use of biomechanical analysis and scientific training methods represents another technological innovation that enhances ballet pedagogy through evidence-based approaches to technique development and injury prevention. Students benefit from training methods informed by research on optimal movement patterns, muscle development, and performance enhancement [7]. This scientific approach appeals to students who respond well to logical, systematic training methods and helps create more effective and safer training programs.

Innovation in assessment and documentation through technology enables more comprehensive tracking of student progress and more objective evaluation of technical and artistic development. Digital portfolios, video documentation, and online tracking systems provide detailed records that support student advancement and program evaluation [8]. These tools particularly benefit multicultural programs by providing multiple ways to demonstrate learning and achievement that may not be captured through traditional assessment methods alone.

## 6. Conclusion

The examination of cultural influences on ballet pedagogy across different international schools reveals the dynamic and evolving nature of classical dance education in our increasingly interconnected world. This study demonstrates that while the technical foundations of ballet remain universal, the pedagogical approaches, institutional structures, and educational philosophies employed in ballet training vary significantly across cultural contexts, reflecting deeper societal values and educational traditions.

The persistence of European pedagogical models as foundational frameworks for international ballet education underscores the historical significance and technical rigor of traditional approaches developed over centuries. However, the successful adaptations and innovations emerging from North American democratic pedagogical principles, Asian cultural synthesis models, and multicultural inclusive practices demonstrate that ballet education can maintain artistic excellence while embracing cultural diversity and contemporary educational insights.

The trend toward culturally responsive and inclusive pedagogical approaches represents a significant evolution in ballet education that promises to enhance accessibility, relevance, and effectiveness for diverse student populations. These developments suggest that the future of ballet pedagogy lies not in abandoning traditional methods but in thoughtfully integrating cultural sensitivity, democratic principles, and innovative practices that honor both classical traditions and contemporary educational needs.

The implications of this research extend beyond ballet education to broader questions about cultural adaptation in artistic training, the balance between tradition and innovation in specialized education, and the role of cultural competence in effective pedagogy. As ballet continues to develop as a global art form, understanding and implementing culturally sensitive pedagogical approaches becomes essential for maintaining both artistic excellence and cultural inclusivity.

Future research should continue to examine the long-term outcomes of different pedagogical approaches, investigate best practices for cultural adaptation in classical training, and explore the potential for developing new synthesis models that combine the strengths of various cultural approaches. The ongoing evolution of ballet pedagogy reflects the art form's vitality and its capacity for growth and adaptation while maintaining its essential character and standards.

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