

# Creativity as Capital in the Literacy Classroom: Youth as Multimodal Designers

HKU Constituent Theme-  
*Languages, Media & Communication:*  
*Language in Education & Assessment Seminar Series*

Speaker

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(Chair: Ms Margaret M. Lo, Faculty of Education, HKU)



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## Abstract

Many school literacy practices ignore adolescents' new digitally mediated subjectivity as it has been shaped by the new media age. Youth possess often unappreciated repertoires of practice which allow them to use their imagination and creativity to combine print, visual and digital modes in combinations that can be applied to new educational, civic, media and workplace contexts. This article reports on research in two middle years classrooms in New York City's Chinatown, where students' design skills were recognised and validated when they were encouraged to critically re-represent curricular knowledge through multimodal design. The curriculum, rather than privileging print-only representations, recognised the linguistic, social, economic and cultural capital that different students brought to school. The findings suggest schools should harness youths' creativity—that often manifests itself through their capital resources—as they integrate and adapt to the new digital affordances acquired through their out-of-school literacy practices.

**Dr Christopher Walsh** has recognised expertise in the areas of transdisciplinary multiliteracies; curricula design; multimodal design/teaching and learning; and queer theory. Before working at Deakin University, he worked for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Afghanistan on reconstruction, teacher training and ESL textbook authoring. Previously, he also taught TESOL in New York City's Chinatown and his current research, funded by the Australian Research Council, examines youth's literacy practices in the 21st Century and learning from computer games (with Beavis, et al.). His recent publications draw on a social practice of literacy by taking into account the multimodality of students' out-of-school literacy practices.

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