Looping represents a curricular-instructional practice where a group of students remain under the guidance of a teacher for more than the standard
period of time (typically more than a single academic year) while they are promoted to a new grade level. After typically a 2- or 3-year period, students move on to a new teacher(s) and the original (looping) teacher returns to a lower grade level to work with a new group of students. Resting upon the premise that better curricular and instructional practices may be crafted by the teacher who has become familiar with the needs and interests of the students, looping is often used as a way to establish a small school feeling and stability to the educational process. The practice is said to lessen anxiety of students as they begin each new year and to build stronger relations among teachers and parents. Looping was implicit in the structure of education during the late 19th- and early 20th-century one-room school house where only one teacher was available to all students. Historically, the term teacher rotation has also been used to describe this practice.

Although looping’s pedigree is not necessarily traced back to the progressive education tradition, such experimentation occurred at the elementary, middle, and secondary school level (especially in core curriculum courses). At times, efforts were made to keep students and a teacher together for more than 1 year, a practice which is common in Waldorf Schools where teachers and students stay together typically from the first through eighth grade. Progressive educators felt that the informed teacher could best craft the curriculum for adolescent youth and to serve as a better way to attend to academic, social, and emotional needs. The Ohio State University School, one of the six most experimental schools of the Eight Year Study (1930–1942), practiced looping at different times throughout Grades 1 through 12; in addition, the impact of looping was incorporated into the education program through the planned participation of the school librarian and arts specialists. An interesting question from some worried parents arose from teacher–student dynamics: What if a teacher and student did not get along? The school administration maintained that an important aspect of building community and establishing democracy as a way of life included resolving conflicts. Teachers believed that an aspect of a realistic learning community involved attending to and working through conflicts and strained personal relations. For this reason, what has later been viewed as a criticism of looping was viewed as a way to make the educational experience richer and more realistic.

Presently, looping is seen, along with block scheduling, as an effective means of assisting low-achieving student populations. Many positive attributes are assigned to looping, including increased parental involvement and stronger teacher–parent relationships, more extensive instructional time and better curricular design in relation to scope and sequence, increased student attendance and retention, better teacher–pupil planning, and more positive classroom environment. From an educational administrative perspective, it is often noted that looping is an inexpensive educational reform.

The concept of looping has been introduced specifically into the field of curriculum studies by Nel Noddings as she describes the importance of continuity in education. Noddings reintroduces a basic assumption, common among 1930s progressive schools, that the classroom community, similar to a family, is a multipurpose setting. She maintains that a moral educational purpose is to care for children as a way to teach them to care for others and that the relationship of caring is developed over time and calls for educators to implement aspects of continuity into the curricular structure. One specific form is continuity of people, for which Noddings maintains that 3-year looping programs should be commonplace.

With the current trend toward elementary school specialization of subjects among teachers, looping at times is dismissed as academic concerns overshadow the emotional needs-based interests of students. Other disadvantages of looping typically discussed include the possibility of tension between teacher and student or among students and the potential for emotional strain caused by the separation between teacher and student. Yet looping proponents, at both the elementary and middle school level, suggest that more instructional time is gained during the 2nd and 3rd years of looping due to teachers’ familiarity with students’ interests and needs. Further, the strength of classroom relationships and emotional attachments can serve to reduce truancy.

Virginia Richards

See also Caring, Concept of; Eight Year Study, The; Noddings, Nel
Lyotardian Thought

In the late 1970s, Jean-François Lyotard (1924–1998) was commissioned by the government of Quebec, Canada, to analyze changes in Western knowledge since World War II. In his report, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, published in 1979, Lyotard describes the erasure of culture and aesthetics with the incoming technological age, (mis)shaping advanced, industrialized societies, computerizing them and their concept of knowledge. Reality becomes bytes of information, and performativity becomes the legitimation of that reality. In schools, test scores (high or low) not only attest to one's knowledge acquisition but also legitimate (or not) one's values and methods of operation. We are the scores we produce, and our curricula are designed not to help students question, explore, and think, but to produce efficiently.

Lyotard's report is a warning as to where our performance driven society is headed and calls on us to "wage a war on totality." His report interrogates the present state of knowledge and challenges the totalizing power of modern metanarratives, grand écrits, wherein all problems and possibilities fit together so well that no space is left for questioning, for interpretation, or for the uniqueness of singularity. While committed to challenging this totalizing power of the metanarrative, the sudden popularity of the word postmodern (and its implied categorical separation from the modern) caused Lyotard to rethink whether he had chosen the right word for the process he wished to advocate.

The prefix *post* signifies a time that comes after, subsequent to, or coming later than, suggesting a separated past, present, future—too strong a distinction for Lyotard. He later preferred the prefix *re*, which carries different signification: To rewrite modernity is to bring forth issues, working through the problems (and possibilities) inherent, but hidden, in the continual present, the now, pregnant with issues yet-to-be. Lyotard's (re)writing of the problématiques of modern metanarratives addresses the totalizing and terrorizing effects of modern representation. His rewriting of modernity has profound and wide ranging implications for the field of curriculum studies, particularly his attention to modern reality, rewritten as event, and the limitations of modern representation rewritten as language games and differen-

Although Lyotard was a committed Marxist and phenomenologist early on, he later found the master narratives of Marx and Hegel troubling: All was solved by history's inevitable march toward progress, toward a better life. He found Marxism in its view of social problems to present a flat reality. For Lyotard, reality is event-ful—full of events––and singular events cannot be fit into a grand scheme. Something of the personal, filled with desires, passions, hopes, is always left over, a surplus, something for which rational interpretation can not account. This event-ful reality brings with it a personal ethics that requires one to think through each and every situation, to accept the responsibility of such thinking through, and to develop a politics that is not formulaic.

There is a need, Lyotard claims, to free up the rigidity of the grand écrits by searching for ways that personal passions and political structures interplay with one another. Structures are needed, but they need to be flexible. The implication for curricularists is that one should neither willingly impose the structure of curriculum on students, nor dismiss the value of structure. Rather, teachers should attend to the situation, aid students to find their own interpretations within a curriculum, their own connections to, differences from, and reflections on curricular structures.

According to Lyotard, modern reason (human reasoning reified) effectively functions to make individuals want to be or to do what the system needs for its own efficient functioning. To counter this totalizing aspect of modernist reason, Lyotard draws upon Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept language games (to rewrite reason). What attracts

Further Readings

