The politics of pupil self-evaluation: A case of Finnish assessment policy discourse

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ABSTRACT
Illustrating the rising trend across education systems, the article examines the socio-historical constitution of the politics of pupil self-evaluation in the case of Finnish compulsory education assessment policy discourse. By studying self-evaluation as a ‘politics’, which, drawing on studies in governmentality, engages in the governing and shaping of educational practices, the conduct of teachers and pupils but also in the forming of pupils’ selves, the article challenges the mainstream understanding of self-evaluation as an apolitical technology of learning in pursuit of better learning outcomes. The article suggests that pupil self-evaluation will be consolidated as a normal educational practice. Importantly, implying subjectifying power, a self-regulative and self-evaluative pupil subjectivity in compliance with the requirements of current globalized knowledge economy and evaluation society will be mobilized and called for.

Introduction
Reflecting the evaluation society trend (Dahler-Larsen, 2011) and constructive and self-regulative learning theories highlighting self-assessment integral to effective learning (e.g. Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009; Brown & Harris, 2014; Clark, 2012; Zimmerman, 2002), we have experienced a rise in pupil self-evaluation. The demand for self-evaluation and the related aspiration towards continuous self-improvement is deeply ingrained in global discourses of lifelong learning and 21st century competences and skills (see, e.g. OECD, 2008, 2013, 2019). Following these, pupil self-evaluation or self-assessment has been incorporated into the educational policies, curricula and pedagogical practices throughout education systems from early childhood to higher education—often under ‘formative assessment’ or ‘assessment for learning’ (e.g. Andrade & Cizek, 2009; Assessment Reform Group, 1999; Bialik et al., 2016; Birenbaum et al., 2015; Black & William, 1998; Brown & Harris, 2014; Cizek, 2009; Clark, 2012; Looney, 2011; OECD, 2013). Eventually, developing pupil’s evaluative expertise—the ability to self-evaluate and to evaluate the work of others—has been raised as the ‘critical feature of twenty-first century curriculum and education’ (Wyatt-Smith & Adie, 2021, p. 404).

In educational theories, policies and practices, pupil self-evaluation is habitually considered to be a fairly neutral and apolitical skill of reflection—a technology of learning intended to help pupils to become ‘better learners’ (see, Wyatt-Smith & Adie, 2021, p. 400), achieve better learning...
results and performance (e.g. Andrade, 2019; Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009; Boud & Soler, 2016) and finally, be more competent members of society. By contrast, drawing on studies on governmentality, subject and power (Foucault, 1982, 1988, 1976/2010/2010, 2000; Rose, 1989/1999, 1999/2009), especially as applied in fields of sociology, politics and critical history of education and curricula (e.g. Ball, 2003, 2013; Bleakley, 2000; Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2012; Fejes & Nicoll, 2015; Fendler, 2003; Grimaldi, 2019; Holloway & Brass, 2018; O’Neill 2015; Perryman et al., 2017; Popkewitz, 1997), this article addresses self-evaluation as a form of societal power and governance operating elementarily through working on pupil subjectivities—by constituting and making pupils into specific kinds of subjects (Popkewitz, 2018) meeting the requirements of the global knowledge economy (e.g. Choo, 2018; Hilt et al., 2019).

For this purpose, to illustrate and bring out the power in pupil self-evaluation, the article studies the phenomenon as ‘politics’, as the politics of pupil self-evaluation, and examines its socio-historical mobilization in the case of Finnish curricula and assessment policy discourse. Employing the poststructuralist notion of governmentality, subject and power (e.g. Ball, 2013; Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2012; Fejes & Nicoll, 2015; Foucault, 1982, 1988, 1976/2010/2010), by the term politics of pupil self-evaluation, following interrelated aspects of governing will be covered. Conceived of as the ‘conduct of conduct’ it encapsulates intertwining elements of governing others, being governed and governing one’s self (Foucault, 1982, 1988; Rose, 1999/2009, pp. 3–4) in the policies and practices of pupil self-evaluation. Hence the politics of pupil self-evaluation outlined and constituted e.g. in and through governmental and legislative orders, curricula and pedagogical theories is first taken here as a discourse and the related technology of power governing and shaping the educational and pedagogical practices of school, and the conduct of both teachers and pupils to achieve the specific ends of government. Second, it refers to the politics of the self by presenting these theories, policies and related pedagogical practices of pupil self-evaluation as sites where pupil subjectivities are made, managed and constituted but also through which pupils are persuaded to disclose and act upon and simultaneously constitute and govern themselves (see, Ball, 2013, pp. 133, 143–144; Foucault, 1982, pp. 18–19; Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2012; Fejes & Nicoll, 2015) in relation to given standards of curricula and societal and school expectations. In these surroundings, citing Fejes (2011, p. 810), pupils are invited to ‘work upon the self to become that which is deemed desirable’.

Taking these interrelated aspects of governing, subject and power together, the theoretical premise of the article is that the current politics of pupil self-evaluation is part of governing education and society not only by formal regulation and rule, but fundamentally by operating through the educated; through managing, shaping and forming pupils’ subjectivities and inviting them to act upon and govern themselves in the practices of self-evaluation, finally to become ‘governable subjects’ (Rose, 1989/1999, p. vii)—subjects of the evaluation society. Hence it simultaneously subsumes a manifestation of power, e.g. by steering and ordering the conduct of people and groups of people, as well as operationalizing a technology of the self, allowing subjects to govern themselves, act upon themselves and transform themselves into a specific kind of subjects in the socio-historically changing practices of the self (see, Foucault, 1988, pp. 18–19, 49; Grimaldi, 2019, p. 6; Tanner & Prieto, 2014, p. 556). Hence pupil self-evaluation, raising its importance in national and transnational education policies under themes such as formative assessment, assessment for learning, self-regulative learning and life-long learning (e.g. Assessment Reform Group, 1999, 2002; Birenbaum et al., 2015; Black & William, 1998; Looney, 2011; OECD, 2013, 2020) is not assumed here to be a pure technology of learning, but considered elementarily as a technique of contemporary government, which, according to Rose (1989/1999, p. 11) ‘operates through the delicate and minute infiltration of the ambitions of regulation into the very interior of our existence and experience as subjects’.

The notion of governing and power has been marginal in the scholarly literature on pupil or student self-evaluation and assessment, but widely deployed by earlier research in the fields of sociology, politics and history of education and curriculum studies studying evaluation and
assessment in education and education policy. These include, for example, studies examining genealogies and histories of educational assessment and evaluation in diverse contexts discussing not only local socio-historical specificities but also how these relate to more general trends of governing through evaluation and assessment across education systems (e.g. Jöhannesson, 2001; Kauko et al., forthcoming; Lundahl, 2003, 2006; Lundahl et al., 2017; O’Neill, 2015; Pitkänen, 2019; Simola, 2002; Varjo et al., 2016). The focus on governing and power has also been widely present in studies scrutinizing the effects of diverse quality evaluation policies and technologies, large-scale testing and datafication at global, national and local levels and their contribution to the government of people, education and societies (e.g. Ball et al., 2012; Kauko et al., 2018; Ozga et al., 2011; Verger et al., 2019) likewise in studies examining the effects of diverse evaluative techniques and reflexive practices on teachers’ and learners’ subjectivities (e.g. Ball, 2003; Fejes, 2011; Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2012; Fejes & Nicoll, 2015; Fendler, 2003; Holloway, 2019; Holloway & Brass, 2018; Jeffrey & Troman, 2011; Perryman et al., 2017).

These studies, addressing a wide variety and range of reforms in assessment and evaluation policy and practices, concerning grading, educational standardized testing and measurement, monitoring, standardization, inspection and teacher accountability, have continuously indicated that the mobilization of these evaluative technologies, practices and policies supported by historically changing societal and educational discourses do not only transform and govern everyday practices of education and assessment; They fundamentally change how education, teaching and learning are perceived and rationalized and how teachers and pupils perceive themselves. For example, in the USA context Holloway and Brass (2018; see also, Holloway, 2019; Ball, 2003) showed how the introduction of market and managerially based techniques of evaluation and accountability changed the ‘teachers’ subjective existence’, their elementary understanding of what is it to be a (good) teacher from a professional and autonomous teacher towards a performative teacher internalizing the rationality of market and the principles of corporate managerialism as their own preferences and professional values. O’Neill (2015) in her genealogical study on assessment policy in the New Zealand context, showed instead how assessment policy reforms instituting technical-managerial and business-corporate discourses and practices in the 1990’s, reoriented students and teachers ‘motivations and practices towards fiscal, actuarial, business-enterprise concerns’ (p. 834), and at same time mobilized self-governing, innovative and entrepreneurial subjects meeting the requirements of ‘Enterprise Culture’ (O’Neill, 2015; see also 2016).

Notwithstanding the extensive research on evaluation and assessment from the perspective of societal power and governance, pupil or student self-evaluation or self-assessment has largely been bypassed as the main focus of analysis. Theoretically, it has been addressed by Bleakley (2000) and Tan (2004), discussing the disciplinary, normalizing and subjectifying effects of self-evaluation in higher education, and empirically, for example, in the Swedish context, by Tanner and Prieto (2014) indicating how the pupil self-evaluation, intended as an exercise in self-knowledge turns to fabricate pupil subjectivities in relation to the ideal pupil conforming to school demands. In the Finnish context Simola (2002), examining the genealogy of the examination of pupil’s behaviour and conduct, also noted the mobilization of the ‘portfolio student’, the pupil willing to be evaluated by others and by the self and imbued with a ‘sense of self-selection’ by Curriculum 1994. Instead, pupil self-assessment has been extensively examined as part of the constructive and self-regulative learning process in the promotion of 21st century competences, education and curricula (e.g. Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009; Andrade, 2019; Boud & Soler, 2016; Skovholt et al., 2019, p. 47; Wyatt-Smith & Adie, 2021), however, rather contributing to the adoption of self-evaluation as a technology of learning than analysing power in self-evaluation.

Instead, this article, arising from the theoretical premises set out above and by drawing on the scholarly literature discussed, raises pupil self-evaluation as a societal power and governance to the main focus of analysis. Paving the way for analyses in other context too, this will be done by
studying the socio-historical mobilization of the current politics of pupil self-evaluation in the case of Finnish comprehensive education assessment policy discourse by posing following research questions:

1. How has the current politics of pupil self-evaluation emerged and taken shape in the history of Finnish curricula and assessment policy discourse?
2. On what techniques and forms of power and governance does it rest?
3. What subjectivities does it mobilize and support?

The case— Finnish comprehensive education

The Finnish case is illuminative for the topic of this study as it currently stands at the international forefront in mobilizing the policies and practices of pupil self-evaluation. For example, the European Union affiliated report Assessment practices for 21st century learning presents Finland as exemplifying a ‘powerful push’ towards student self-assessment (Siarova et al., 2017, pp. 11, 68). Similarly, the OECD (2020, 16) raises as the key strength of Finnish assessment policy that ‘self-evaluation is common for educational institutions, and students are encouraged to assess their own progress’. This emphasis figured in the introduction of Curriculum 1994 (Simola, 2002). Self-evaluation currently constitutes an elementary element of assessment practised in Finnish comprehensive education (NBE, 2014, 2020a, 2020b). Accordingly, pupil self-evaluation as part of formative assessment is expected to be a normal part of everyday learning and teaching.

The current curriculum divides assessment into formative and summative. Albeit serving different functions, these are considered to complement and support each other. Formative assessment, referring to continuous day-to-day feedback, discussion and support from teachers but also pupils evaluating themselves and their peers is aimed to guide and encourage learning, lead pupils towards achieving their objectives, improve their performance and to foster the development of pupil’s learning, peer-evaluation and self-evaluation skills. It is intended to provide pupils with self-knowledge and understanding about their own learning and strengths. Whereas formative assessment is aimed to support, guide and promote learning during the learning process, summative assessment, inscribed as written evaluations and/or grades in school reports, aims at determining the level of a pupil’s performance in relation to curricular objectives at specific points in time. School reports are generally given in the middle and end of the school year, and the certificate of basic education at the end of the ninth class. (NBE, 2020a). The national assessment criteria for grades 5, 7, 8 and 9, in a grading scale 4–10, were recently introduced for final assessment to support uniform grading across the country and across schools (NBE, 2020b). For grade eight, indicating good knowledge and skills, criteria for grading at the end of the second, sixth and ninth classes were already issued in 2004 (NBE, 2004).

Against the global tide, Finland uses no national examinations or standardized student achievement testing of whole age-groups. Instead, national testing is conducted through sample-based studies eliciting information for school improvement rather than on accountability or parents’ choice of school. Finland has no school inspection system. (Kauko et al., 2020.) These exemplify (non-) practices through which the Finnish system has run counter to global trends in education policy (Kauko et al., 2020; forthcoming; Pitkänen, forthcoming) relying on the rationality of improving educational standards and effectiveness by applying market, managerial and performance-based technologies and solutions, including high-stakes testing and sanctioning of low-performing schools and teachers (Ball, 2003; Sahlberg, 2016; Verger et al., 2019). By contrast, educational quality has been sought through master’s-level scientific teacher education and decentralized and deregulated education governance. Instead of strong national and centralized control over quality, the Finnish municipalities (N = 309 in 2020) as the main education providers in Finland (only a small proportion of pupils enrols in private education) and schools enjoy autonomy and have major responsibility for self-evaluating and improving the education they provide, along with participation in sample-based
national external evaluations (Kauko et al., forthcoming, 2020; Simola, 2015). Schools and education providers also play a major role in implementing local curricula and evaluation and assessment policy under the regulations of the national core curriculum and evaluation policy (Pitkänen, 2019).

**Genealogical analysis of the politics of pupil self-evaluation**

In studying the current politics of pupil self-evaluation, the article employs genealogical methodology—the history of the present (Foucault, 1977). Focusing on the interrelated axes of knowledge (i.e. discursive practices), power (i.e. governing) and subject (i.e. ethics; Ball, 2013; Heikkinen et al., 1999; Pitkänen, 2019; Popkewitz, 1997), the article scrutinizes the socio-historical descent and formation of the current politics of pupil self-evaluation, the constitution of subjects within it, and how these are interrelated and conditioned by socio-historically changing formations of knowledge and assemblages of power in the field of assessment.

On the knowledge axis, in answering research question one, the article examines the socio-historical emergence, mobilization and formation of the ideas, rationalities, theories and conceptualizations that enable the insertion of pupil self-evaluation and pupils as evaluators of themselves in the Finnish assessment policy discourse. Thus, knowledge does not here refer to universal knowledge, but to knowledge constituted and taken as such, as a ‘truth’, by some socio-historically specific discourse conditioned by related relations of power and enabling specific subjectivities to emerge (e.g. Foucault, 1969/2013; Heikkinen et al., 1999).

On the power axis, in answering the second research question, the article focuses on the diverse forms and techniques of governing, such as the disciplining, normalizing and subjectifying power embedded and deployed in the policy discourse (e.g. Foucault, 1975/1991), especially on those techniques and forms of ‘the power which makes individuals subjects’ (Foucault, 1982, p. 781). This takes place as pupils are guided by curricula under the control and supervision of the pastoral power of teachers, to disclose themselves as specific kinds of pupils and learners (see, Fejes & Nicoll, 2015; Foucault, 1982) in relation to given standards, and through this ‘very act of disclosure […] come to know who they are’ (Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2012, p. 6). Thus, the question of power is not reduced to a question of who has or wields the repressive power or domination over others, but how this operates in myriad practices, institutional settings and conditions of society, not only by governing the conduct of others but through the internalization of that government into the very soul and body of the people (e.g. Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2012; Foucault, 1976/2010/2010; Rose, 1989/1999, 1999/2009), by inviting subjects to conduct themselves, think, be, feel, behave and value accordingly with the discourse as the regime of truth (Ball, 2015, p. 307; Popkewitz, 1997).

On the axis of subject, answering the third research question, the analysis focuses on subjectivities mobilized and invoked within the politics of pupil self-evaluation, within its changing discourse (knowledge) and practices (power). Thus, the concept of subject does not refer to some authentic personhood to be found, but the way ‘human beings are made subjects’ within socio-historically changing settings and conditions of power and knowledge. The operation of self-assessment as a technology of the self is acknowledged, meaning the ethical work through which the subject acts upon and constitutes him or herself as an ethical subject (see, Foucault, 1988; Heikkinen et al., 1999). In this sense, it could also be considered as a practice of self, through which the ‘subjugation of ‘docile bodies” supporting structures of domination in society can be resisted (Besley, 2007, pp. 58–59).

In this theoretical context, on the interrelated axes of subject, knowledge and power, pupil self-assessment, usually approached as an apolitical technology of learning, is now elementarily deemed a practice and technology of truth, power and subject formation. Thus, the article points out how the policies and practices of pupil self-evaluation are effective in their capacity to shape, make and govern people, education and society, not only in specific case of Finland, but across contexts.

As historical manifestations of Finnish assessment policy discourse, the main educational legislative and curricular texts since the introduction of Finnish compulsory schooling in 1921 will be used as data (n=25). The Finnish National Library (https://kansalliskirjasto.finna.fi/Search/Home) and
legislative (https://www.finlex.fi/fi/) databases were utilized in selecting the relevant documents presented in Figure 1. The analysis focuses on the documents concerning assessment in elementary and comprehensive school, excluding the documents of selective grammar schools. The Finnish education system moved from the dual track system consisting of elementary school, established in 1866, and grammar school, established in 1858, to a comprehensive school system, a nine-year school for all children, in the 1970s.

Aligning the post-structuralist and genealogical frame, instead of using the data primarily as a source for composing representational chronological accounts of what has been addressed in pupil self-evaluation by policy, it is approached as effect and constitutive of discourse ‘inscrib[ing] rules and standards by which we ‘reason’ about the world and our ‘self’ (Popkewitz, 1997, p. 132). In Ball’s (1993, 2015) methodological terms, the policy data studied is analytically approached here as a discourse rather than as a text. Whereas the policy-as-text approach has its focus on the processes of formulation, interpretation and translation of policy, the policy-as-discourse approach focuses on how certain policy problematizations and their solutions, and the related subjectivities are enabled and constituted by the socio-historically changing discourses manifest in data. In this sense, data are seen both the ‘instruments and effects’ of discourse (Ball, 2015, p. 307), which ‘over time, has worked to shape reality and constitute particular ways of knowing, doing, and being’ (Holloway, 2019, p. 400).

The analysis commenced by reading through the data and compiling all text passages presenting pupils as evaluators of themselves as direct citations into an Excel file. Passages describing pupils as objects of assessment in specific curricula chapters focusing on assessment were also noted. This appeared methodologically and analytically critical as the mobilization of self-evaluation and related subjectivities and forms of power could then be understood as part of the historically formatted and changing assessment discourse, where traditionally the pupil had been mainly positioned as the object of assessment. The emergence of pupil self-evaluation was thus approached in relation to its historical background rather than emerging from nowhere. As will be shown in the analysis, this relation between the assessment of the pupil and assessment by the pupil, or the pupil as the object and the subject of assessment, remains fluid in the discourse studied. Even today, despite increased emphasis on self-assessment, the pupil remains positioned as the object of assessment. This frames and conditions the practices of assessment by the pupil and limits the extent to which the pupil can be perceived or thought of as the evaluator of him or herself.

In selecting passages, the function of the text raising the pupil either as the object (assessment of pupil) or the subject (assessment by pupil) of evaluative practices and judgements served as selection criteria instead of searching for some specific terms used in referring to assessment. This was considered an inclusive method given the wide variety of terminology used in discussing

![Figure 1. The research data.](image-url)
assessment throughout the research period (e.g. summative assessment, diagnostic tests, pupil observation, record keeping, day-to-day feedback, monitoring, grading, reflection, formative assessment). The compiled data was then read and analysed on each genealogical axis as presented above.

**Historical constitution of the politics of pupil self-evaluation**

In the analysis, two intersecting socio-historical discursive formations of assessment as assemblages of subject, knowledge and power, were raised and considered elementary to the constitution of the current politics of pupil self-evaluation: Assessment 1) as a practice of the discipline and truth about the pupil and 2) as a practice of disclosure and technology of the pupil’s self. Whereas the first, with its focus on assessment of the pupil, constitutes the socio-historical context and draws discursive boundaries for the politics of pupil self-evaluation, determining for its part the outer limits of ‘what can be said, and thought’ (Ball, 1993, p. 14) and in turn, done (Holloway, 2019), the latter introduces the idea and rationale of pupil self-assessment; the rationality enabling the understanding of the pupil as evaluator of herself or himself. These formations are next discussed.

**Assessment as a practice of discipline and truth about the pupil**

Assessment of the pupil and its operation as an instrument of disciplinary power combining hierarchical observation and normalizing judgement (Foucault, 1975/1991, pp. 170–171) have been firmly incorporated into the very structures and routines of school through the history of modern mass education (see, Ball, 2013; Bourke et al., 2015; Foucault, 1975/1991; Simola, 2002). Under assessment, pupils are subjected to an evaluative normalizing gaze, positioning them as objects to be known, seen, classified, ordered and compared in relation to some underlying norms or standards, thereby enabling specific ‘knowledge’—a truth—about the pupil to be used in guiding, training, governing, shaping him or her to become a useful and docile member of society—to discipline the pupil rather than repressing (see, e.g. Ball, 2013; Foucault, 1975/1991; Simola, 2002). These tendencies, of diverse intensities and forms, are also manifest in the studied discourse and are analytically encapsulated and discussed here under the discursive practice of discipline and the truth about the pupil.

**Making the pupil knowable and disciplined by assessment—early trends**

Assessment of the pupil has been among the routines of Finnish elementary school since its inception in 1866, but was rather loosely and generally regulated for decades (Simola, 2002). The act establishing compulsory education (101/1921) was practically silent on it, only briefly mentioning the school leaving certificate (§3) and the examination of pupils not attending elementary school (§13). The subsequent Decree on Elementary Education (190/1931) also laid down very basic principles concerning grading, such as presenting the grading scale assessing pupils ‘conduct and diligence and attentiveness plus knowledge and skills in school subjects’ (§13). In practice, assessment and grading still remained under the teacher’s sovereign power, resting on common sense, personal conviction and the moral judgement of each individual teacher (Simola, 2002, p. 211) instead of on some common rules or standards.

In the context of Finnish agrarian pre-World War II society, this was hardly an issue. In elementary education educating pupils into an ‘established religious and agrarian way of life’ (Simola, 2002, p. 209; e.g. KM, 1925, pp. 49–51), the function of grades in classifying, ordering and administrating pupils into the various educational paths or positions in working life or society was limited. As an exception, the grade in conduct carried weight, serving symbolically as a testimony to a pupil’s decency, or if low, which sufficed to exclude the pupil from successful citizenship (Simola, 2002, p. 212) entailing normalizing and disciplinary power. The same applied to elementary school certificate, that was reasoned as
proof that the holder (of the grade) is fit as far as conduct is concerned, to be a member of society and a school leaving certificate not to be issued to an individual whose behaviour is subject to serious reproof (NBGE, 1943).

In the 1940s, assessment gradually received more attention and focus in the studied discourse. The uniformity of grading between schools and school districts as well as sufficiently high standards in grading were raised as policy concerns by National Board of General Education (NBGE), which argued that the value of elementary school would suffer inflation if good grades or certificates were given to ‘undeserving’ pupils (NBGE, 1943). Taken here as a ‘standard that unifies practice’, elementary to the operation of disciplinary power (Ball, 2013, p. 51), the NBGE specified the principles those teachers, head teachers and inspectors should follow in order to provide ‘truthful’ information about pupils ‘conduct and diligence and attentiveness plus knowledge and skills’, and at same time, solve problems of heterogeneity and variable standards, threatening the general plausibility of the elementary education institution in society. For example, it stated that assessment should 1) comply with the normal curve at school and district level, 2) eliminate from the grading any like or dislike felt by the teacher towards the pupil and 3) not give lower grades in academic subjects as a result of disobedience or infringements by the pupil. (NBGE, 1943) As a result, the teacher’s omnipotence in assessing the pupil was slightly restricted by imposing limits and governmental standards according to which the truth about the pupil should be provided in the practice of assessment, enabling not only disciplining of the pupil but also of the teacher.

In postwar decades elementary education came to be increasingly perceived as a channel for producing workforce for a society that was urbanizing, industrializing and facing rapid structural and economic changes. Assessment would serve that, too, as it was now considered to ‘sift, measure and sort each individual of the growing generation and guide them to prepare to the positions in society accordingly to their facilities and abilities’ (Salmela, 1948, p. 5). Reflecting these tendencies and implying both disciplinary and pastoral power, the Decree on Elementary School (321/1958) also stipulated that ‘pupils’ facilities, abilities and hobbies should be continuously observed and recorded for use in counselling to guide pupils to find their place in societal positions in keeping with such information.

Elementary education shall closely relate to economic life and assist pupils in co-operation with the authorities concerned to choose their role therein and provide foundations for vocational education. To facilitate careers advice, continuous records of pupils’ facilities, abilities and hobbies shall be kept [.]. (Decree, 321/, §22)

After World War II this standardizing tendency continued. Now it was increasingly driven and conditioned by the developments in theories of educational psychology, testing and statistics—by internationally proliferating scientific discourses following the statistical style of reasoning originating from the United States and spreading across contexts, albeit at a varying pace and to a varied extent (Saari, 2013; Varjo et al., 2016; see also, e.g. Jóhannesson, 2001; Lundahl, 2003, 2006; Lundahl et al., 2017). Whereas the grades given by teachers were previously believed to be the only possible method of describing pupils’ learning results, now grading by individual teachers was seen to be arbitrary and subjective (Konttinen, 1995, p. 6; Saari, 2013, p. 15; Varjo et al., 2016, p. 48). Emerging practices of standardized testing and educational measuring should tackle these issues and bring the aspired objectivity, validity, reliability and uniformity into assessing pupils (see, KM, 1970a, pp. 162–172). In this context, the disciplinary truth about an individual pupil would rest increasingly on knowledge of what appeared ‘normal’ in the pupil population and on knowledge to be acquired through standardized tests and exams or other standard measures developed by educational-psychological scientists. (see, Saari, 2013.) Unlike in many other education systems, in the Finnish context, this rationality has never materialized through the introduction of continuous high-stakes testing practices, striving towards highly standardized, ‘objective’ and comparable ‘truth’ about pupil, and at the same time markedly de-professionalizing teachers, subjecting them to the ‘terrors of performativity’ (see, e.g. Ball, 2003; Holloway & Brass, 2018). Instead, this rationality of discourse materialized in the form of participating in large-scale international studies since the late 1950s (Kauko et al., 2020) and through the extensive academic literature guiding and encouraging teachers
to use standardized or other approved tests when assessing pupils (e.g. Heinonen, 1961; Heinonen & Viljanen, 1980; Vahervuo, 1958) in the sense of scaling their own assessment in relation to these standards (e.g. KM, 1970a, p. 159) instead of delimiting their professional autonomy. In the studied discourse, this rationality is embodied in the first comprehensive school curriculum showing an elementary peak in the formation of assessment as a practice of discipline and the truth about the pupil.

The peak and entrenchment of assessment as the practice of the disciplinary truth about the pupil

While assessing pupils had gradually become a concern elsewhere in the studied discourse during the era of elementary school, it was hardly discussed in the elementary school curricula documents (KM, 1925, 1946, 1952). For example, Curriculum 1946 only explained that the required examinations should be arranged so as not to constitute the main element in teaching. Instead of monitoring the outcomes of learning, teachers should guide pupils towards effective and continuous practising of what had been learned. (KM, 1946, pp. 16–17.) Comprehensive school, introduced concurrently with the building of the egalitarian Finnish welfare society (see, e.g. Varjo et al., 2021), constituted a fundamental break with this rationality. By following the developments in educational psychology and the testing discussed above, as well as Tylerian target-based curriculum theory (Saari, 2013; Simola, 2015) the first comprehensive school curriculum adopted an almost opposite stance by highlighting assessment and evaluation as a fundamental phase of teaching and education to ascertain whether the aims and targets of teaching were indeed achieved (KM, 1970a, 1970b).

This curriculum introduced a wide variety of assessment techniques, such as examinations, standardized testing, prognostic and diagnostic testing, ability and personality testing, systematic pupil observation and surveillance and diary keeping (KM, 1970a, pp. 158–172; see, also, Simola, 2002) to obtain evaluative knowledge about each individual pupil, not only in terms of performance and abilities, but also about their personality, physical, emotional, cognitive and social development, and social conditions such as family background and hobbies (see, KM, 1970a, pp. 160–162, 171–172, 186; NBGE, 1973). This knowledge would enable ‘diagnosing’ the pupils, predicting their success but also order or rank pupils according to their performance (KM, 1970a, pp. 159–161, 169). It would enable the ‘right picture of a pupil’s success’ and ‘individual progress’, which in turn was considered fundamental to making ‘rational’ choices concerning their future education and careers (NBGE, 1973; KM, 1970a, p. 161) to respond to the current demands of society, its ‘growing need for highly educated workforce required harnessing the nation’s stock of human capital’ as put by Varjo et al. (2021). Therefore, by curriculum 1970 pupils were subjected, body and soul, to continuous evaluative surveillance, set under the ‘will to knowledge’ and related discipline (see, Foucault, 1976/2010/2010) through diverse assessment techniques in order to respond the needs of a changing society and economy.

The general drive to render the pupil knowable through diverse assessment techniques and practices of assessment would persist in all later curricular documents (NBGE 1985, 29–36; NBE 2014, 24–29; 2004; 2014, 47–59; 2020a; 2020b) and in the legislation (Decree 443/1970, 985, 1085; 718/84, 47–49§, 115§; 858/1998, 10–14§; Act 628/1998 22§) of the research period. The recent embodiment of this will to knowledge by assessment is found in the highly specific and standardizing, 308-page curricular order on describing and determining criteria for grades 5, 7, 8 and 9 (on a scale 4 fail—10 outstanding) in final assessment published in 2020 (NBE, 2020b; also, 2014, 2020a) to assist teachers in equal grading. Rendering the pupil knowable and representable in numbers (grades) and thus comparable, and orderable, at the level of pupil population, it is intended to ensure equal access to further education regardless of teacher, school or geographical location. Thus, the historical formation of assessment as a practice of discipline and truth about the pupil, inscribed especially in numbers, continues to be at the core of the present assessment policy discourse and curricula.
Today, the will to know the pupil may initially appear less pervasive and disciplinary than in the 1970s as the assessment was geared towards their learning, work and conduct in relation to curricular objectives (NBE, 2014, pp. 49–50; 1994, 2004, 2020a, 2020b) instead of taking the entire body and soul of the pupil as the object of evaluative scrutiny. For example, the recent curricula explicitly forbid focusing the assessment on ‘the pupils’ personality, temperament or other personal characteristics’ (NBE, 2014, pp. 48, 50, 2020, 5), which, in addition to knowledge regarding pupils’ knowledge and skill, aspirations, background, abilities and hobbies, were paramount in making the pupil knowable in the 1970s curricula (KM, 1970a, pp. 160–162, 171, 186.) Second, assessment has been assigned to functions other than providing the ‘realistic picture’ and truth about the pupil. For example, it has been highlighted that assessment should be supportive of learning (NBE, 2004, p. 249, 2014, p. 27, 2020a, p. 2; Act628/1998, §22), and contribute to the development of healthy self-esteem (NBE, 1994, p. 24) and personality (NBE, 2004, p. 262). These developments may suggest that assessment has become less pervasive in pupil’s identity, more neutral and less dependent on power relations—suggesting apolitical assessment. However, as shown below: With the emergence and constitution of the discursive formation here referred to as assessment as a practice of disclosure and technique of the self, which appears as an entry point for current politics of pupil self-evaluation, novel forms and relation of knowledge, power and subjectivities are enabled and put into operation in the governing of education and the educated. These reflect the requirements of a changing society and the rise of the global knowledge economy calling for self-governing, self-regulated lifelong learners, individuals amenable to continuous self-monitoring and improvement.

**Assessment as a practice of disclosure and technique of the self**

With the switch to a comprehensive school system in the 1970s, the nascent idea of pupil self-assessment emerges in the Finnish policy discourse. Since then, assessment has not only functioned as a technology of producing the pupil as knowable, identifiable, comparable and signifiable in terms of numbers or qualitative remarks, allowing qualifying and sorting, and at same time producing and objectifying them as specific types of pupil. Rather, along with the introduction of a new kind of discursive formation, here referred to as a practice of disclosure and technique of the self, pupils also became increasingly induced to tell the truth about themselves by engaging in self-evaluation—by disclosing and confessing themselves to be specific kinds of pupils (see, e.g. Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2012; Fejes & Nicoll, 2015; Foucault, 1982) in relation to requirements set by curricula. Next the focus turns to these developments introducing a new kind of discursive rationality culminating in what the article conceptualizes as the politics of pupils’ self-evaluation.

**History of the disclosure and constitution of the pupil by the pupil**

An early idea of pupil self-assessment is found in the curriculum of 1952, calling for young pupils to be imbued with a critical stance towards the methods and results of their own work (KM, 1952, p. 19), but only adopted at curricular level as an element of assessment in the first comprehensive school curriculum (KM, 1970a, 1970b). Nevertheless, the exact concept of pupil self-evaluation or assessment was not adopted, but the idea of the pupil-subject engaging in self-evaluation was initially articulated in the curriculum reasoning that assessment and grades would serve pupils as proof of their own development and progress (KM, 1970a, pp. 158, 165, 1970b, pp. 139, 231, 287). Thus, grades or test results would not only provide elementary information on the pupil—telling the truth about the pupil—to others, such us parents and teachers, but also to pupils themselves. This information would enable pupils to monitor themselves and their progress, look at and inspect themselves in the light of assessment and grades assigned by the teacher. Pupils were therefore constituted as subjects taking themselves as objects of monitoring (see, KM, 1970a, pp. 158, 165) beside being set and subjected to a battery of evaluative activities and scrutiny—as an object of the teacher’s constant evaluative gaze, by the very same curriculum. This was also explicated as a
didactic aim, as ‘the objective is that pupils themselves can assess their achievements and so also follow their progress’ (KM, 1970a, pp. 160–161). Consequently, the pupil was not only disciplined through external control and surveillance, but given a push towards self-discipline.

The idea of self-evaluative pupil subjectivity continued to evolve in the 1985 curriculum. The curriculum raised the issue of continuous feedback by teachers and noted it as supportive of pupils’ motivation towards continuous study and self-development (NBGE, 1985, pp. 84, 94, 160, 228). Importantly, feedback based on continuous proof, was aimed to guide pupils towards self-evaluation—to assess their own learning outcomes (NBGE, 1985, pp. 29, 84). In this way, truth provided by teacher in the practice of assessment was also increasingly expected to be told and constituted by pupils themselves; by pupils reflecting on the information provided to them through examination, grades and continuous feedback from their teachers. At the end of comprehensive school, this was expected to be manifested and internalized as a specific condition of ‘mental maturity’, which, as a form of self-knowledge, would enable pupils to create a ‘realistic picture of their own limitations and possibilities’ in their future education and lives accompanied with the desire and ability for continuous self-development (NBGE, 1985, p. 11). In this way, the ‘maturity’ or decent citizenship of pupils completing their school education is manifest in their capacity to constitute a realistic picture of themselves, corresponding to the information on pupils yielded by the practices of assessment telling the truth about the pupil. Thus, the ‘maturity’ elementarily relates here to the pupils’ ability for self-governance and self-constitution aligning with the grades in their school leaving certificate.

**Consolidation of pupil self-assessment as a practice of self**

The 1994 curriculum again foreshadowed dramatic change with regard to self-assessment. It was enacted in the societal context of a major economic depression and a concurrent transformation from an egalitarian, social-democratic welfare state towards a competitive state in which education and education governance also became restructured increasingly along the lines of market individualism, managerialism and the ethos of excellence (Kauko et al., 2020; Simola, 2015). Whereas earlier curricular documents were fairly comprehensive and detailed, serving as manuals for good school-keeping (Simola, 2015), the 1994 curriculum, embodying the idea of management by results, only laid down general national frames and main educational targets. These were intended for further specification in ‘curricula drafted in schools themselves’ (NBE, 1994, p. 10), to reflect the local circumstances of education providers, education policy desires and school-level aims and pedagogical solutions (Kauko et al., 2020; Pitkänen, 2019). Also, the background theory of the curriculum changed as it explicitly renounced the prevailing Tylerian curriculum theory (NBE, 1994, 9). Education became rationalized as a ‘dynamic process’ instead of being driven by static goals in a Tylerian sense (NBE, 1994, p. 9). Reflecting the New Public Management oriented reforms of the 1990s in the Finnish public sector (see, e.g. Kauko et al., 2020), it was considered that the evaluation and ‘constant reacting to the results’ of it would serve as the main driving forces for that dynamic (NBE, 1994, p. 9).

According to this new governmental rationality, the 1994 curriculum widened the scope and role of evaluation. It introduced the explicit concept and practice of pupil self-assessment alongside the introduction of the practice of school self-evaluation supported by the education provider. School self-evaluation, assessment including pupil self-assessment, annual school reports and final assessment would now constitute the totality of evaluation at the level of school. (NBE, 1994, pp. 21–29.) Evaluation and assessment were highlighted as ‘a natural part of teaching and education’, present in all interactive situations at school, explaining that the pupil ‘forms his (sic!) self-image through evaluation’ (NBE, 1994, p. 28.). In this explicit notion of pupils constructing their own self-image in evaluative practices of schooling the potential functioning of evaluation and assessment are crystalized as a practice and technology of the production of a pupil’s self.

The 1994 curriculum highlighted that pupils should not only be educated to become citizens capable of critically evaluating knowledge and phenomena in society (NBE, 1994, pp. 92, 94, 96, 97, 100, 107, 111), but also themselves and their learning (NBE, 1994, pp. 57, 68, 100, 107, 111). For example, in language studies it was intended that the pupil ‘develops his (sic!) study skills and self-
evaluation skills himself (sic) and takes responsibility for his (sic!) learning’ (NBE, 1994, pp. 63, see also pp. 74, 100, 107, 111). The curriculum consequently mobilized not only the idea of a dynamic curriculum but called for a dynamic, self-regulating and self-evaluating pupil subject prepared to survive future uncertainties and continuous changes by continuous reflection and analysis of their own learning—by disclosing and acting upon themselves as specific kinds of learners in the practice of pupil self-evaluation. These, apparently, reflect not only the rise of constructivist and self-regulative learning theories at the level of curricula, but also the above mentioned societal, political and economic changes which, in the mood of neoliberal rationality and market individualism challenging the egalitarian welfare discourse (see, e.g. Simola, 2015, pp. 28–35) raised individuals as responsible for their learning, future and fate, success and failure, perceiving the individual as ‘entrepreneur of oneself’, and at the same time individualizing social and structural problems and disadvantages (e.g. Kinnari n 2020; Simola, 2015; Spohrer et al., 2018).

The Finnish education legislation, thoroughly reformed in the late 1990s, consolidated pupil self-assessment in the Finnish assessment policy discourse and normal practices of education, aiming to cultivate pupils capable of continuous self-evaluation. These entered the legislation stipulating that ‘the aim of pupil assessment is to guide and encourage learning and to develop the pupil’s capability for self-assessment’ (Act 628/1998). Since then, pupil self-assessment has been explicated in the Finnish curricular documents as part of assessment practices and as a skill to be developed to ‘support the growth of the pupil’s self-knowledge’, study skills, learning and progress in studies (NBE, 2004, p. 264, 2014, pp. 47, 49, 2020a, p. 2) along with the assertion of the idea of a self-regulated, critical and evaluative learner (Council of State, 2001) in the spirit of lifelong learning. Due to these developments, the task of the teacher became not only to grade and assess in a ‘truthful’ (NBE, 2004, p. 262) and ‘valid’ (NBE, 2014, p. 49) manner but increasingly to practice, guide and supervise pupils towards self-evaluation to enable them to form a ‘realistic picture’ of themselves as specific kinds of pupils and learners; to reflect on their ‘strengths’, ‘weaknesses’ and ‘opportunities’ as pupils in relation to curricular standards, so as to support learning (NBE, 2004, pp. 262–264, see 2014, 47).

Compared to the previous curricula, pupil self-evaluation received even more pervasive forms and manifestations in the 2004 curriculum. First, it framed self-evaluation as a working skill to be subject to assessment and yearly subject-specific grading (NBE, 2004, pp. 264, 266). The evaluation of ‘working skills’, referring to the capability to plan, regulate and evaluate one’s own work individually and in co-operation with others, skills required from the self-regulated lifelong learner, remains in force to this day (see, NBE, 2014, pp. 49–50, 2020a, p. 7). In this way, set under disciplinary forces and teachers’ evaluative gaze, pupils’ ability for self-evaluation became one of the objects of assessing the pupil. Second, it introduced the idea that pupil self-evaluation should be reflected in the planning and organizing of the learning environments and in the use of working and learning methods at school. For example, these should support pupils ‘capacities for taking responsibility for one’s own learning, for evaluating that learning, and for seeking feedback for purposes of reflecting on one’s own actions’ (NBE, 2004, pp. 18–19). Thus, pupil self-evaluation, together with the introduction of self-regulated learner subjectivity, was mobilized as a model and principle in arranging educational and pedagogical spaces and environments at school. The politics of pupil self-evaluation were to be materialized in pupils’ surroundings and normalized as part of everyday school life.

The pervasiveness of the politics of pupil self-evaluation was finally reflected in the introduction of a description of good performance and the final evaluation criteria in the 2004 curriculum, prescribing the level for a grade of eight on a scale 4–10 for pupils’ knowledge and skills in each school subject. In several cases, in diverse school subjects, the curriculum also raised pupils’ capability to evaluate themselves as an explicit evaluation criterion in grading. For example, good performance (grade eight) at the end of the sixth school year or in the final assessment reflected the pupils’ competence to evaluate their ‘skills’, ‘strengths’, ‘weaknesses’ or working and learning, for example, in the mother tongue, language studies and crafts (e.g. NBE, 2004, pp. 112–113, 120, 140–141, 153, 240). Pupils’ capacity for self-evaluation, production of self-knowledge, thus became one of the targets of assessing pupils conducted by teachers and guided by the description of good
performance and the criteria for learning and grading. In this way, the assemblage of the disciplinary, normalizing, individualizing and subjectifying forms of power were rearranged and operationalized interactively in new ways through the student assessment technologies and ideas in the 2004 curriculum.

This tendency has continued in later curricular documents (NBE, 2014, 2020a, 2020b). Although these documents strongly suggest that self-evaluation should not impact grading (NBE, 2014, pp. 238, 378, 407, 276, 437, 2020a, p. 2), each of them includes several statements in which the pupil’s capacity for self-evaluation is considered one criterion of good performance and the grading conducted by teachers. The demand appears not only in relation to academic subjects (e.g. NBE, 2014, pp. 165–166, 189, 2020b, pp. 10, 27–28, 37–38, 44), in which, for example, it is expected that to achieve grade eight or above pupils should evaluate the progress of their skills or learning in a relatively realistic manner (e.g. NBE, 2014, pp. 207, 230, 304, 308, 432). The demand is also present in non-academic subjects such as handicrafts (NBE, 2014, p. 273) or gymnastics, where pupils are intended to be able to evaluate their physical attributes (NBE, 2014, p. 276). Table 1 below presents a slightly modified extract from the most recent curricular document (NBE, 2020b) to illustrate this tendency. It will show, taking Finnish language and literature as an example, how the capability for self-evaluation and related self-improvement is embedded in the grading criteria in the final assessment. Moreover, such self-evaluative and self-regulative pupil subjectivity is especially attached to pupils achieving higher grades as they are not only expected to be able to analyse their skills and areas for development but also to consider how to improve them.

Thus, even though the curricula stressed that pupils’ self-evaluations should not affect their grades, more than ever, pupils’ ability to self-evaluation has become a requirement stipulated in curricula and also a criterion in assessing pupils. Moreover, even though curricula forbid focusing the assessment on the pupil’s personality, this also increasingly calls for a specific kind of individual, a person capable of self-regulation, self-evaluation and self-improvement. This evidently reflects the requirements of the current globalized knowledge economy calling for self-regulated and autonomous learners, individuals seeking and responsible for their continuous self-improvement in the spirit of lifelong learning (see, e.g. Kinnari, 2020).

Noting the above tendencies of the discourse studied, the article argues, we have seen not only the rise of pupil self-evaluation, but also the rise of the politics of pupil self-evaluation formatted and operating at the interface of the formations of the assessment as a practice of truth about pupils and as a practice of disclosure and technique of the self. As a ‘politics’ it has the power to govern educational practices, education and the educated not only by imposing some rule and command requiring self-assessment but essentially, by making, shaping and governing pupil subjectivities, and guiding pupils to govern and constitute themselves as specific kinds of pupils and learners in the practices of educational assessment. Educating, cultivating and making the subject not only capable but also desirous of continuously self-evaluating and improving him or herself might even lie at the core of the current politics of pupil self-evaluation.

**The politics of pupil self-evaluation—discussion and conclusions**

This article examined the socio-historical formation of the current politics of pupil self-evaluation in the case of the Finnish comprehensive education assessment policy discourse, which, aligning policy as a discourse approach (Ball, 2015), is considered effective in its power of “inscribing[ing] rules and standards by which we ‘reason’ about the world and our ‘self’ (Popkewitz, 1997, p. 132), therefore effective in governing and shaping not only educational practices and the work and conduct of teachers and pupils, but also the experiences and subjectivities of those involved (e.g. Ball, 2003; Holloway & Brass, 2018; O’Neill, 2015). While the empirical focus was on the Finnish discourse, the results exemplify a larger trend in the global knowledge economy and evaluation society, in which the self-evaluative, self-regulative subject aspiring to continuous self-improvement, manifested as
Table 1. Evaluation of objective four in Finnish language and literacy (NBE, 2020b, pp. 1–3).

| Teaching objective                                                                 | Learning objectives                                                                 | Description for grade 5                                                                 | Description for grade 7                                                                 | Description for grade 8                                                                 | Description for grade 9                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Aim 4. To support pupils in intensifying their self-images as communicators so as to be able to observe their own communication and identify their own strengths and areas for improvement. | Pupils learn to observe their own communication and identify strengths and areas for improvement. | Pupils can name some of their communicative strengths or determine the object of improvement. | Pupils can describe themselves as communicators and name some strengths and areas for improvement. | Pupils can analyse their skills, strengths and areas for improvement in communication. | Pupils can evaluate their communication skills and strengths and consider how to improve them. |
the ‘entrepreneur of himself’, is deeply ingrained and inscribed (see, Spohrer et al., 2018, p. 329; Foucault, 2008; Grimaldi & Ball, 2021) with the support of educational theories, policies and practices of pupil self-assessment claiming to be supportive of learning.

The article claims that the current politics of pupil self-evaluation has been socio-historically constituted and mobilized at the interface of discursive formations of assessment as a practice of the truth about the pupil and as a practice of the disclosure and technique of the pupil's self, both of which are accompanied by specific kinds of relations of knowledge, subject and power as summarized in Table 2. Both discursive formations are clearly manifest in the current curricula and assessment policy discourse, making the assessment an interplay of tendencies of assessment as a practice of truth and self-formation. While pupils are increasingly guided and expected to evaluate themselves, their learning and skills, and to consider how to improve these, they are at the same time placed under a disciplining evaluative gaze, making them knowable, comparable and orderable often by grades—by numbers. Finally, the drive is not only to make them knowable in terms of their learning results, but importantly, in terms of their capability for self-evaluation and self-improvement.

The left column of Table 2 encapsulates assessment as a practice of discipline and truth. As shown in the article, the wish for knowledge about pupils and the related technology of assessment as a practice of discipline and truth has prevailed throughout the history of elementary and comprehensive education until today. Initially, the power of disciplining and telling the truth about the pupil in practices of assessment was in the hands of fairly sovereign teachers, then became increasingly guided and directed by diverse educational theories and governmental policies of assessment. In the early decades of compulsory schooling, in the context of agrarian pre-World War II society, this wish for knowledge appeared fairly loose, but still powerful enough to normalize and determine who is considered a decent citizen. Following the rapid economic and structural changes in society since the 1950s and the introduction of the comprehensive school system in the 1970s as part of the constitution of the egalitarian welfare state, the desire for knowledge peaked. Relying on internationally diffused theories of educational assessment and psychology but also on statistics, pupils were brought under scrutiny body and soul through diverse assessment technologies. Currently the focus is on providing information on the attainment of the learning objectives of each individual pupil in relation to curricular standards and expectations articulated e.g. in the form of criteria and descriptions of good performance. Representing not only the professional authority of teachers to assess pupils, this discursive formation rests primarily on the disciplinary and individualizing mechanisms of power and continuous surveillance of pupils in reference to what is expected by the curriculum and therefore by society, deemed normal or good pupil performance in the pupil population and simultaneously proclaiming the truth about each individual pupil in reference to these. The discursive formation positions and constitutes the pupil subject as an object knowable, and amenable to representation in terms of numbers and grades, in respect to criteria laid down in the curriculum. These constitute the discursive and practical condition for the politics of pupil self-evaluation that cannot be ignored when discussing and thinking about pupils as evaluators of

| Discursive Formation & Axis | Assessment as a practice of discipline and truth about pupil | Assessment as a practice of disclosure and self-formation |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Knowledge                   | Educational psychology, theories of educational assessment and testing, statistics, normal curve | Constructive and self-regulative learning theories, idea of formative assessment |
| Power                       | Surveillance and disciplinary power operating through techniques of assessment, teacher telling the truth | Pastoral power of teacher, subjectification, holding accountable and individualization of pupil through discourse and practices of self-evaluation |
| Subject                     | Pupil rendered knowable and disciplined through grading and numbers | Self-regulative and self-evaluative pupil constituting and acting upon themselves in the technique of self-assessment to become an 'entrepreneur of himself/herself' |

Table 2. The politics of pupil self-evaluation assembled at the interface of assessment as a practice of truth and self-formation.
themselves or when putting self-evaluation into practice. Albeit the importance of pupil self-assessment has increased in the discourse and educational practices studied, the pupil in terms of his or her learning, working and conduct, continues to be positioned substantially as an object of assessment conducted by the teacher.

The right column in Table 2 summarizes the elements of the formation of assessment as the practices of disclosure and the technique of the pupil’s self, gradually evolving and taking shape since the early 1970s. Especially since the mid-1990s, reflecting not only the rise of constructive and self-regulative learning theories and the idea of formative assessment, but requirements for life-long learning to respond to the requirements of the global economy, self-evaluation has become a fundamental component of assessment. With the incorporation of these ideas and practices of self-assessment, pupils are now expected to construe themselves not only as learners but indirectly also as (future) members of a continuously changing society and economic system. It is through the practices of self-evaluation that pupils are invited to scrutinize themselves and provide a ‘realistic’ picture of themselves, their learning and future prospects as well as to improve themselves. Thus, they are increasingly expected to govern and produce their selves through the practices of pupil self-assessment. Finally, the task of education and teachers is to guide and accustom pupils to accomplish this on their way and development towards becoming decent members of an evaluation society, capable of continuous evaluation of their surroundings and their selves, and at the same time, internalizing the demand for continuous self-improvement. Thus, the teacher as supreme evaluator in the early years of elementary education has become a teacher not only providing and proclaiming the truth about pupils through grading, assessment and verbal feedback, but supervising and guiding pupils towards becoming self-regulated learners and evaluators of themselves, taking responsibility for their own success or fate, in the spirit of ‘entrepreneur of himself’, to meet the requirements of a globalized knowledge economy (see, e.g. Spohrer et al., 2018, p. 329).

The politics of pupil self-evaluation examined by this article in the case of Finnish comprehensive education illustrates the more general trend taking place across education systems worldwide and manifest in the theories, policies and practices of assessment-for-learning and formative assessment claiming to support and promote learning. The article has aimed to show that there is more at stake in these than pure learning. In a post-structuralist sense of the critique (Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2012, pp. 7–8), this article has sought to render conceivable and debatable this ‘more’, which is extending the area of policy and curricula intent or premises of the educational theory. As said, in the case of this article this ‘more’ refers to power and subject formation in self-evaluation. In this sense, the article makes a serious claim, namely that pupil self-evaluation, formative assessment or assessment for learning should not only be considered as ‘the single most powerful tool we have for both raising standards and empowering lifelong learners’ (Assessment Reform Group, 1999, pp. 2, 5; also, 2002; Black & William, 1989; Cizek, 2009, p. 7; Looney, 2011, p. 8). Instead, the politics of pupil self-evaluation, inscribed in current policies, curriculum and educational practices, should be acknowledged as a powerful mechanism of societal power. It is not only powerful in its potential to change educational practices through the introduction of self-evaluation, but particularly powerful in its making and shaping of pupil subjectivities (e.g. Foucault, 1982; Popkewitz, 2018) in the daily practices of education and educational assessment. Thus, the article invites researchers, policy makers, education administrators, curriculum planners and educators planning and implementing policies and practices in pupil self-evaluation to consider it not only as a learning technology but as a politics governing education and educated. Therefore, it should be studied and approached as the ‘politics’ of governing others and self, as suggested by the term ‘politics of pupil self-evaluation’.

The article also raises more questions to be studied. It lays the foundations for looking into the everyday practices of pupil self-evaluation and for studying how the politics of pupil self-evaluation is enacted in schools and lived and experienced by teachers and pupils. What subjectivities it supports or enables for pupils with diverse backgrounds. How does the power in self-evaluation work through making pupil subjectivities? It likewise raises the opposite question to be considered: Would there be a role for self-evaluation to operate as an ethical practice of pupils taking ‘care of the
self, ‘as an ascetic practice of self-formation’ (see, Ball, 2013; Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Besley, 2007; Foucault, 2005), which Foucault (1997) describes as ‘an exercise of the self on the self by which one attempts to develop and transform oneself, and to attain to a certain mode of being’? (p. 282), through which the ‘subjugation of “docile bodies” supporting structures of domination in society could be resisted (Besley, 2007, pp. 58–59; Ball & Olmedo, 2013). This article does not answer these fundamental questions, but lays the foundations for them to be posed, reflected on and studied, especially by looking into the everyday practices of pupil self-evaluation.

Note

1. In the article pupil self-evaluation and pupil self-assessment will be used in parallel. However, self-assessment is preferred when referring to a concrete activity of pupils assessing themselves. In turn, when discussing self-assessment in more abstract and theoretical level, the term self-evaluation will be used. This is to capture the practice of pupil self-assessment also as a societal phenomenon implying power.

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