**Participation, Democracy & Power**

**The Change of Public Participation in Swiss School Governance: More or Less Public Legitimization?**

**Session 12: Contemporary Challenges to Local Self-Government and Democracy**

**Panel 198: Local Political Participation: What Difference Does it Make?**

Patricia Anna Buser,\(^1\) paper prepared for the 7th ECPR General Conference, Bordeaux, September 2013. Work in progress, please do not cite.

**Abstract:** *Public municipal school boards* are the traditional form of public layman participation in Swiss local school governance. We however observe a reduction and professionalization of traditional public school councils and an institutionalization of councils involving only parents (*parent councils*) since the 1990s. This paper addresses the question of how the layman participation and the understanding of democracy are changing in Swiss school governance. I investigate what functions public participation has for democracy by analyzing the tasks as well as institutional and economical criteria of participatory forums.

The analysis shows that parent councils have more of an economic rather than a democratic function: Parents support schools with the organization of school activities without having co-determination rights. The implementation of parent councils and the reduction of public school councils thus indicate a change from public participation to stakeholder participation. The involvement of stakeholders provides the local government with a greater capacity for responding to stakeholder demands but not for the demands of the entire public. This change of the understanding of public in school governance demonstrates as well a change from input legitimacy to output legitimacy in democracy.

**Keywords:** Participation – Democracy – Input Legitimacy – Output Legitimacy – School Governance – Layman Participation – Parent Councils – School Boards

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1. Introduction: School Governance and Public Participation in Switzerland

Public municipal school councils are the traditional form of public layman participation in local Swiss school governance. All tasks of traditional school councils represent the idea of a public school as a school by the people (Brüsemeister 2007: 224). Because of direct democratic rights of Swiss citizens and the rather ubiquitous system of militia i.e. the right of Swiss citizens to participate as laymen in local school boards, input legitimacy in Swiss school governance is highly weighted. Input legitimacy refers to the idea of democracy by the people: The people's will is built in public debates, ending up in a majority vote, and thus legitimizing policies. The output-perspective however refers to the idea of democracy for the people: Policies are legitimized if they enhance public welfare, i.e. if they are effective (Scharpf 1970, 1999: 16ff, Koch 2013).

In Swiss school governance we observe a reduction and professionalization of traditional public school councils and an institutionalization of councils involving only parents at the same time.² It is however not clear whether these parent councils are intended to enhance public co-determination or not. My paper addresses the question: Is public participation and the understanding of democracy in Swiss school governance changing?

Although citizens in Swiss municipalities already have a lot of direct-democratic possibilities, (including existing school boards), some Swiss cantons have nevertheless institutionalized new participatory forums involving only parents. It is a priori not clear whether parent councils are a complementary or a substitutive element to school boards. An enhancement of parental participation can also be seen as a circumvention of the competencies of the democratic elected school boards (Maag Merki/Büeler 2002: 139).

To examine the change of public participation and its consequences for the understanding of democracy, I analyse the function of participation in the field of school governance. In doing so, the function of participation has to be taken into account. This includes the tasks and institutional as well as economic criteria of participatory forums in school governance.

By participatory forums I mean local layman councils in school governance. Layman councils are forums where professional knowledge is not a selection criterion for participation and

² This paper is part of the project “school governance and the participation of laymen” founded by the Swiss National Fund.

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the job is either unpaid or only symbolically paid and not a full time job (the so-called militia
system).

In Switzerland, we have two forms of participatory forums in school governance. Traditional
local school boards on the one hand and newly institutionalized parent councils on the other.
Members of school boards are citizens holding the passive and active right to vote (i.e. Swiss
citizens in most of the cantons/municipalities) and get directly elected by the citizens of a
municipality entitled to vote. Members of parent councils are stakeholders and get elected
by the parents of one class or school. The delegated parents act on the school level, members of school councils on the municipal level.

Methodologically I investigate how the public participation in Swiss school governance is
changing by examining the function of participatory forums and their potential to enhance
input or output legitimacy in school governance with data from secondary document
analysis, and expert interviews from an in-depth case study of the canton of Zurich.\(^3\)

The article starts with an overview of the debate on parent involvement and parent
community involvement and shows which developments and ideologies lay behind the
institutionalization of new forms of layman participation, as e.g. parent councils (chapter
two). Chapter three reflects the theoretical assumptions concerning the function of public
participation to enhance output or input legitimacy of democracy in general. Finally I discuss
the results of the case study by presenting the function i.e. the tasks and institutional as well
as economic criteria of school boards and parent councils (chapter four). I then compare
school boards and parent councils, their potential to enhance input or output legitimacy of
Swiss school governance and what the functions of layman councils shows us about the
change in democratic understanding (in chapter five).

\(^3\)The article is part of a larger project that is investigating the change of public participation in four Swiss
cantons by using qualitative data from document analysis interviews with local and cantonal experts, group
discussion and quantitative data from two representative surveys.

In total 16 school actors had been interviewed in the canton of Zurich: Interviewees: Cantonal actors: Party
members: Social Democratic Party (SP), Christian Democratic People’s Party (CVP), People’s Party (SVP), Liberal
Party (FDP). Education Department: Education Council (RAT), Department of Public Education (BD), External
Evaluation (ESE). Association Members: Teachers Association (LV), Association of School Boards (SPV). Local
actors: Headmasters (SL), School Board (SPF), Municipality Council (GR). Municipalities: Urban (UZ), Suburban
(SZ), Rural (LZ).
2. International Debate on Parent Involvement (PI) and Parent Community Involvement (PCI): Ideological Background

Parent involvement (PI) and parent community involvement (PCI) has not received a great deal of attention in the German academic sphere yet (Marz/Zubke 1982, Struben 1998, Batt 2007, Gomolla 2009). The same can be said for Switzerland and its school governance systems⁴ (Corter/Pelletier 2005: 321). In Anglo-Saxon countries, the academic attention on PI and PCI has continuously increased since the 1980s (Corter/Pelletier 2005: 295, Chubb/Moe 1988, Casanova 1996).

According to the OECD-report (2010: 499), parents have more participation rights in countries without free school choice. This is true of Switzerland, where private schools are marginal and the distribution of pupils is organized by the state. Swiss governments react towards parents’ criticism with the enhancement of participation rights, referring to the paradigm of “voice” rather than “exit” (Hirschmann 1970).

There are two international developments that support the requirement of a stronger participation of parents in school governance: The discussion of school autonomy and the dissemination of the paradigm of New Public Management (NPM). NPM promotes, based on the critics of traditional planning and administrative practice, local governance reforms that include citizen participation (Haikiö 2012: 2). The innovation-level of government and administration and the efficiency of decision-making should improve through the participation of those people directly involved (Papadopolous/Warin 2007: 445-448). From an NPM-perspective, participation is needed for the assurance of the output quality (Horton 2003: 404).

School autonomy⁵ can be understood as an “optimizing” or a “participation” strategy: If the aim of school autonomy is to optimize school quality, local knowledge should, comparable to the NPM-logic, help to find adequate solutions for pragmatic local decisions (OECD 2008: 524). The intention of the participation model of school autonomy lies however in the integration of different local actors (input legitimacy).


⁵ The concept of school autonomy includes personal (assessments, employment), pedagogical (curriculum) and financial autonomy (global budget) of public schools (Altrichter/Rürup 2010: 114).
The dissemination of the NPM-paradigm in school governance (Dubs 1996, Brückner/Tarazona 2010) and the discourse about school autonomy provide the ideological background for the functions of participation in school governance. The following chapter explains the concept of input and output legitimacy and the significance of participation for democracy.

3. Does Participation matter?

Scholars indicate positive effects by public participation on democracy (Fung/Wright 2001, Fung 2006, Wampler 2008). Democracy is by these authors intuitively defined in a republican, communitarian way (Rousseau). The focus lies in the co-determination rights of participants, voting procedures and the representativeness of participatory forums. If participatory forums have no co-determination rights, they are called pseudo-participatory. However, I argue that it is misleading to focus only on the traditional republican concept of democracy when participatory forums and their democratic potential are examined. Besides the republican understanding we can differentiate between an idealistic democracy ideal (Habermas, Dewey) and a neoliberal concept of democracy (Locke, Smith, Hayek, Friedman).

According to Scharpf (1999) these different concepts of democracy are related either to input, throughput or output legitimacy of a political system. Firstly input legitimacy refers to the resources, throughput legitimacy secondly to empowerment and output legitimacy finally to the effects. The democratic quality of a political system is therefore defined by its resources, processes and effects. Table one shows the different concepts and dimension of democracy.

Table 1: Concepts & Dimensions of Democracy (Scharpf 1999)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts of Democracy / Dimension of Democracy</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Idealistic</th>
<th>Neoliberal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>Republican, Communitarian (Rousseau)</td>
<td>Deliberation, Learning (Dewey, Habermas)</td>
<td>Liberal, NPM (Locke, Smith, Hayek, Friedman)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy</td>
<td>Input Legitimacy</td>
<td>Throughput Legitimacy</td>
<td>Output Legitimacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Resources (Co-Determination)</td>
<td>(Learning)processes</td>
<td>Effects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that democracy has different dimensions and there are different ideological concepts behind these dimensions. The function i.e. tasks and criteria of a participatory forum explain their potential to enhance the democratic quality of school governance.
Walk (2011: 63 f.) differentiates between three purposes of participation that include different tasks: The traditional democratic purpose (A), the emancipatory purpose (B) and the economic purpose (C).

If input legitimacy should be strengthened through participation, the aim is to enhance the acceptance of decisions through the integration of different interests. Participation is systematically linked with co-determination rights of participants (traditional democratic purpose).

If participation motivates actors to self-responsible action, learning processes are forced and long-lasting structures are developed, the focus of participation lies in throughput legitimacy. The establishment of learning processes and capacity-building is often connected to the expression of empowerment (emancipatory purpose).

If the goal of participation is to enhance the output legitimacy of school governance the focus lies in quality assurance (effects) by participant-feedback and cost-reduction by the improvement of efficiency by using low-cost layman workforce. Participation here improves the communication between the actors. Needs of participants are more considered. As a result planning is more needs-oriented which leads to more durable decisions and in the long term less costly realization of programs (economic purpose). Table 2 shows the purposes of participation and the associated tasks of participatory forums.

### Table 2: Purpose & Tasks of Participation (Walk 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension of Democracy (Scharpf 1999) / Purpose of Participation (Walk 2011)</th>
<th>Input-Dimension</th>
<th>Throughput-Dimension</th>
<th>Output-Dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of Participation</td>
<td>Traditional Democratic (A)</td>
<td>Emancipatory (B)</td>
<td>Economic (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Input Legitimacy</td>
<td>Throughput Legitimacy</td>
<td>Output Legitimacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 illustrates the basic tasks of participatory forums as one indicator to explain the function of school boards and parent councils in Swiss school governance. The focus of this paper lies especially in input and output legitimacy of participatory forums because data on deliberative procedures is not available. In the following passage I describe the economic and traditional democratic ideas in greater detail, to point out the institutional and
economic criteria of participatory forums as a second indicator of the function of participatory forum.

3.1 Input Criteria: From perfect Participation to Pseudo Participation

Participatory forums contain not only a different level of innovation but also are integrated in different national contexts. Their institutional criteria vary a lot. The degree of representation of participatory forums differs as well as the amount of their co-determination rights. Decisions made by participatory councils can have consultative character or be binding enough to influence every stage of the policy-cycle (Papadopolous/Warin 2007: 448).

Wampler (2008: 62) indicates the potential of participatory forums to strengthen the input legitimacy of a democracy by an adequate inclusion of citizens. If the aim of participatory school councils lies not only in the improvement of students’ performance, other indicators like the representativeness of participatory forums are important (Corter/Pelletier 2005: 322). Regarding the representativeness of participatory councils scholars notice some risks: They can have advantages for middle-class citizens and disadvantages for minorities, because the latter are often underrepresented (Corrales 2006: 465, Michels/Graaf 2010, Hatcher 2012: 41).

Another risk or potential lies in the participant’s ability to generalize. Some parents are primarily interested in the performance of their own kids (Levin 1998: 136, 137, Corrales 2006: 466), which causes conflicts between particular and common interests (Innes/Booher 2004). Casanova (1996: 31) pointed out the risk that a small minority of participants can gain power and force a school and parents to adopt their interests.

Besides the risks of representativeness and the participant’s non-ability to generalize, Altschuler and Corrales (2012) demonstrate potentials of participatory forums to deepen input legitimacy. They identify spillover effects: The participation in one policy field can lead to a higher participation in other areas. Participants are able to learn and apply new skills and thus join other public participation institutions. A big challenge of participatory forums is thus to create authority, i.e. the extensions of co-determination rights to the area of decision-making and the inclusion of more participants. Co-determination rights are considered as crucial for input-legitimacy. Participatory forums cannot deepen democracy in an input-manner if its participants have no co-determination rights (Wampler 2008, Fung 2006, Fung/Wright 2001). If participatory forums have no co-determination rights they are
often called pseudo-participatory and can in certain cases be counter-productive (Biedermann/Oser 2010: 31). Therefore regarding input legitimacy; representativeness (1), the participant’s abilities (2), and co-determination rights (3) are important institutional criteria.

In accordance with Fung (2006), all types of participation forums can be classified in a typology regarding the following three criteria: First, the participants (who participates?), second the type of decision (how is the communication- and decision-mode?) and third the co-determination rights (which co-determination rights do participants have?). Graphic 1 illustrates Fung’s democratic cube and its three dimensions.

**Graphic 1: Fung’s Democratic Cube (2006)**

Regarding the participants, within the school governance of the canton of Zurich, we have the education board on the cantonal level as quasi layman council (because delegates represent different spheres of public education, they are unpaid but experts in their field) and the education department with its expert office for external evaluation. On the school level we have headmasters and teachers as experts and school board members and parent delegates as laymen. The crucial distinctive feature is that school board members are citizens, whose selection is related to citizenship. Parent delegates are on the other hand stakeholders, whose selection is related to parenthood.

To describe the function of participatory forums in Swiss school governance, the following participants characteristic are considered as crucial for the *representativeness* of a
participatory forum: First, the status (1) of laymen i.e. if they are citizens or stakeholders. Second, the level (2) on which participation takes place, whether this is on a cantonal, a municipality, a school or a class level. Third, the selection (3) of laymen is important, i.e. whether a real election takes place to select participants or not. In some cases the lack of candidates makes it impossible to organize a vote. Fourth, the composition (4) of a forum i.e. the representativeness of delegates is crucial. Fifth, the abilities (5) of laymen, specifically their know-how and their ability to generalize are considered important. Finally I identify as a sixth institutional criterion the continuity (6) of a participatory forum, whether the composition of members is stable or not over time.

Concerning Fung’s power dimension of participation, where the focus lies on participants’ co-determination rights. This article differentiates between three basic forms or hierarchies of co-determination rights: Decision-making authority (a), where laymen can make independent decisions, influence (b), when laymen have a voting right, consulting (c), when layman give advises to other school actors and involvement (d), including an engagement in the discussion without voting rights. What I call institutional criteria (i.e. representativeness and co-determination) is a combination of Fung’s power and decision dimension broadened through criteria of participants’ and forums’ representativeness because in this study examined parent council and school board participants are all laymen. In the next passage economical criteria of participatory forums are introduced as fundamental indicators for output legitimacy.

3.2 Output Criteria: Possible Effects of Participatory Councils

Participatory forums can contribute not only to input-legitimacy via institutional criteria; they can also have positive effects on the output legitimacy of a school. Participatory forums can influence the performance of pupils, the school climate, efficiency and effectiveness as well as the costs of a school.

In times of PISA-tests school quality is generally reduced to the effects and those effects are considered being equal to pupil performance. While political decision-makers and scholars mention the parental home as a crucial factor for children’s school performance (OECD 2001: 356 f., Stange 2012: 16) and indicate positive effects of school councils on pupil performance (Graue/Weinstein/Walberg 1983, Jeynes 2003 cited in Corter/Pelletier 2005: 299, Moore 1992, Swap 1993; Henderson/Berla 1994, Fuller/Olsen 1998 cited in Ouimette et al. 2002: 2) other empirical studies point out that participatory school forums have no

Although it is not clear whether participation has a direct influence on student performance, participatory forums have positive effects on the school climate. The school climate includes the relationship between school actors and factors like student behavior, motivation and attitude, mutual trust, comprehension and satisfaction. Communication is regarded as a key factor for the potential of participation to influence the school climate in a positive way (Innes/Booher 2004, Corter/Pelletier 2005: 300, Saha 2009: 115).

Beside participatory forum’s effects on pupil performance and school climate, participation can enhance school efficiency and effectiveness. Participatory forums can lead to shared responsibilities and enhance the effectiveness of school management (Kim 2004: 137). Low-cost layman work can enhance school efficiency and contribute to school’s cost-reduction (Corter/Pelletier 2005: 300).

What is not represented in Fung’s democratic cube is the output-dimension of democracy. I define, referring to the economic purpose of participation; performance (1), efficiency, and effectiveness (2) as well as cost-reduction (3) as the central economic criteria. Table 3 gives an overview of the institutional, economic and process criteria of participatory forums.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion Name</th>
<th>Institutional Criteria</th>
<th>Process Criteria</th>
<th>Economic Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criterion Content</td>
<td>Participants &amp; Co-Determination</td>
<td>Learning &amp; Deliberation</td>
<td>Effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 1</td>
<td>Representativeness</td>
<td>Decision Mode</td>
<td>School Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Deliberation &amp; Negotiation</td>
<td>Performance (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Status (1), Composition (4), Ability (5)</td>
<td>within Forums</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 2</td>
<td>Representativeness</td>
<td>Learning Process</td>
<td>School Climate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forum</td>
<td>Educational Program</td>
<td>Efficiency &amp; Effectivity (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level (2), Selection (3), Continuity (6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 3</td>
<td>Co-Determination</td>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>School Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decision-making-authority (a), Influence (b)</td>
<td>Know-How &amp; Self-initiative</td>
<td>Cost-Reduction (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consulting (c), Involvement (d)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Potential</td>
<td>Input Potential</td>
<td>Throughput Potential</td>
<td>Output Potential</td>
</tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

Fung’s criteria of validity (2006) adapted and extended to economic criteria

As institutional criteria for input-legitimacy I include first the representativeness of participants, second the representativeness of the forum and third participants’ co-
determination rights. As process criteria I identify the decision mode, learning processes, and the empowerment of participants. As economic criteria I define performance, efficiency, effectiveness, and cost-reduction. Thus we have on the one hand economic criteria with a potential for the output-legitimacy of democracy. On the other hand we have institutional criteria with a potential for the input-dimension of democracy. These criteria of validity as well as the tasks of participatory forum are used to analyze the function of school boards and parent councils in Swiss school governance and their potential to strengthen democracy as we will see in the case study below.

4 Case Study: Function of School Boards & Parent Councils

In the following chapter I describe the functions i.e. the tasks and institutional structures as well as economic criteria of school boards and parent councils in the canton of Zurich comparatively to draw attention to their potential to strengthen democracy. First I describe the most important developments and institutions in Swiss school governance. Second I illustrate the tasks of traditional school boards and new parent councils. Third I examine the institutional and economic criteria of local participatory forums in Zurich’s school governance. Finally I compare the function of school boards and parent councils and clarify their relation.

4.1 Switzerland between Layman Participation & Professionalization

Switzerland has one of the most decentralized education systems of the world (Heidenheimer 1997, Hega 2000: 1, Stadelmann-Steffen 2011: 1). Swiss cantons manage the organization of public school autonomously and delegate far-reaching competences to the municipalities (Büeler 2007: 134-135). In Swiss municipalities citizens hold traditionally remarkable responsibilities and co-determination rights (Maag Merki/Büeler 2002, Altrichter/Rürüp 2010: 113): Citizens can participate in local school boards and in doing so bear the local management of school governance in many Swiss cantons. However, noticeable changes have taken place concerning public school boards (Brüsemeister 2007: 222). The status of local school boards is heavily uncertain since the implementation of school autonomy at the end of the 1990s. In the German-speaking part of Switzerland school autonomy was systematically linked to the implementation of headmasters; they have thus become important new actors in local school governance (Maag Merki/Steinert 2006: 103). Based upon school autonomy reforms, school board
competences have been reduced to local strategic competences (i.e. local goal definition and inspection) Headmasters have overtaken the operative management (implementation strategies), which before the reform had been in the hand of local school boards and teachers. We can observe a twofold professionalization of Swiss school governance related to the reform of school autonomy: On the one hand new experts – on the local level headmasters and on the cantonal level an office for external school evaluation – have been introduced. On the other hand local management competences have been divided into strategic and operative competences i.e. competences of school boards have been reduced to local strategic competences.

Within the discourse of school reforms the participation of directly involved school participants is required (Quesel/Näpfli 2012). Some cantons like the cantons of Basel-city, Geneva and Zurich institutionalized new parent councils.

In the canton of Zurich NPM-reforms called “Wirkungsorientierte Verwaltungsführung (wif!)” have been introduced by a popular vote in 1996. One project of these NPM-reforms was the school autonomy project called “Teilautonome Volksschule (TaV)” (Widmer/Rüegg 2005: 93). This school autonomy project consisted of 14 components; one of which was the introduction of headmasters and another was the participation of parents. Out of this school autonomy reform, a new public school law was created and introduced after it passed via a popular vote in 2005. At the same time, school boards on the district level were abolished and a cantonal office took over school evaluations.

This overview of Zurich’s school reforms demonstrate how Zurich’s school governance has on the one hand side been professionalized and on the other hand new participatory forums, parent councils has been introduced. In the following passage I examine the functions of layman councils by first describing the tasks and thereafter the institutional and economical criteria of school boards and parent councils in Zurich’s school governance.

4.2 Tasks of Participatory Forums in Zurich

The tasks of a participatory forum can give us a first clue about the function of public participation in school governance. Data about the tasks of local layman councils in Swiss school governance include the legal area of responsibility and the descriptions of interviewed experts. Subsequently we will see that tasks of traditional school boards and newly institutionalized parent councils differ widely from each other.
4.2.1 Tasks of School Boards: Local Management of Public Schools

School boards have in conformity with Zurich’s public school law (VSG 2005: § 42) four main tasks: The guidance of public schools i.e. local strategic management (1), personnel management (2), inspection and supervision (3), communication (4) and the representation toward the public.

Despite school autonomy reforms, school boards in Zurich still have far-reaching competences in the local school governance. The guidance (1) of public school means that school boards, although being layman councils, bear significant responsibilities for local schools. Today guidance includes the strategic management i.e. the development of local short-term strategies, definition of school goals, confirmation of school programs and decision about the organizational statute. School boards define the local organization of public schools, are responsible for pupil allocation and the utilization and control of financial resources of schools. They are responsible for the infrastructure and make school facilities available.

Secondly school boards are responsible for personnel management (2). They hire and fire headmasters and teachers, allocating, inspecting, supervising and supporting school staff. In sum school boards are employers of the whole school staff. Their competences in personal matters are extensive and much broader than in other Swiss cantons. Substantial strategic and personal responsibilities shows that local school decisions in Zurich are traditionally dependent on a public authority, not on school administration.

School board tasks includes not only the supervision and inspection (3) of school staff, they also have to check if cantonal laws are respected. Interviewed actors describe school boards as an emergency brake in local school governance. Their task includes criticism, which is often perceived as disturbing by other school actors. School boards are further in charge of local quality assurance. They give school actors an outside view and act as opposite pole to headmasters. School boards are accountable for parental involvement; they have to claim parent responsibilities. They are also an instance of recourse. To sum up, school boards can be seen as a forum to ensure checks and balances in local school governance systems. As representatives of the public, school boards contribute to improve school quality by providing school staff an outside perspective.

Besides the task of strategic and personnel management, school boards also have a communicative (3) assignment. Delegates are contact persons for parents and staff, they are
supportive and collaborative. Some interviewees describe school boards as the “advocate of parents” (social democratic party_ZH 2012: 111). But they are also supportive of teachers. Local school councils are in charge of the well-being of pupils and teachers i.e. the school climate. They record the ambiance of a school. School boards overtake a mediation role and contribute to the process of negotiation. The task of communication respectively their low-cost support for school staff and their mediation role leads to an enhancement of efficiency and effectiveness in local school governance.

Last but not least school boards represent(4) schools against the public. They have to document and justify decisions to parents and the public. The focus lies strongly on the acceptance and legitimization of local decisions in school governance.

The focus of the legal framework and the actors by describing the tasks of school boards lies clearly on the traditional democratic purpose (A) of participation. The aim of providing a public school board with extensive strategic and personnel responsibilities is to enhance the acceptance of decisions. The same is true of the representation and accountability task of school boards. The task of supervision and inspection leads to a power-sharing between officials and the public, which also contributes to input legitimacy.

Quality assurance through supervision and inspection as well as the enhancement of efficiency and effectiveness in school governance through communication fit the economic purpose (C) of participation.

Legally defined and experts-mentioned tasks show that the aim of school boards is to enhance input legitimacy i.e. the acceptance of political decision on a local and school level by giving school boards important strategic, personnel, inspectional an representative assignments. As we will see, the tasks of parent councils differ in some perspective from the tasks of public school boards.

4.2.2 Tasks of Parent Councils: Parents as Workforce?

In contrast to school boards, the tasks of parent councils are not legally described. According to the organization-statute of schools they have to include parents. How they actually realize it is subsidiary organized. There is just one remark in public school law that parents as such have no co-determination rights in personnel and didactical decisions (VSG 2005:§ 54, § 55).

The interviewed experts mention in totality four different tasks of parent councils: Parental work (1), communication (2), parental education (3) and the political mobilization (4) of all parents through delegates.
The focus within **parental cooperation** (1) is not on strategically important fields like the internal school development but on the organization of events similar to sports days and school parties. Additionally parent councils are active in the area of childcare, homework, security and vocational preparation. The use of know-how can be seen as a particular form of parent work. Parents’ know-how is especially requested in the field of vocational training. From a few actors the role of parents as assistant teachers was mentioned. Parental cooperation is seen more as support for teachers and headmasters, than as an autonomous organization of projects and events. Through the cooperation of parents for certain projects and events, parental resources can be used for school which enhances the efficiency and disburdens schools.

The task of **communication** (2) is a generic term which includes the identification of parent needs, opinions as well as an exchange between the actors. In an NPM-logic it would be efficient to use structural feedback to improve school quality but just three actors mentioned structural feedback as task of a parent councils. Feedback as a task of a parent council is more associated with the identification of parent needs and parent opinions than with structural feedback of teaching, school climate and school projects. The exchange between the actors improves the relationship between school actors and makes sure that parents are finally recognized as valuable actors in local school governance. Because of improved communication between school staff and parents, school climate gets better; school quality as well as customer satisfaction is enhanced. Parent councils are seen as a junction with a bridge-like job between the school and the main customers (or forced customer) of school, the students. The potential of a parent council to integrate foreigners is barely seen as a task.

Parents get sensitized to school matters through the participation in a parent council because they get an inside view of the school. Parent delegates overtake a supportive role for school because parents “strengthen the school’s back” (association of school boards_ZH 2012: 58). The participation of parents in parent councils makes it possible to “take the wind out of the sail” (headmaster_UZ 2012: 172): Since parents get an inside view, they are not just complaining but they see problems with which schools are confronted. Because of institutionalized parental participation, parents are on the opposite recognized as contact person and not only as “impudent and rebellious” (external evaluation_ZH 2012: 147).
In comparison to the task of cooperation and communication evidently fewer people mentioned parent education and political mobilization as task of a parent council. **Parent education (3)** includes the pickup of subjects as well as the attendance and organization of workshops by the parent council. Parent education is useful for both schools and parents. Parents extend their knowledge and networking among themselves. Schools profit from the engagement of parent councils by organizing trainings and sensitizing parents to education matters. Finally workshops help parents to be aware of their job of education through specific information (for example in the field of media use). Parents can possess other resources than schools whereby schools can take advantage of these resources. The focus lies therefore not on financial resources but on parents’ experiences.

**Political mobilization (4)** by parent councils includes the organization of podium discussions about different (school-)political issues. The education department refers that parents can be used politically. One can say: “If you want that schools get more resources you should join the municipal reunion” (education department_ZH 2012: 91). In a negative way you can call it instrumentalization, he said (ibid.). As a result parent councils bear the potential to sensitize and mobilize parents for school-political issues. Political mobilization is only recognized as a task of a parent council from the education department and a mayor from an urban municipality. These actors identify parents as potential voters in the context of direct democracy und hope to gain their votes for school issues.

The emancipatory purpose (B) of participation is covered with the task of parent education. Parent education stimulates learning processes. Delegates act responsible by picking up a relevant issue and organizing specific trainings.

All interviewees stress the economic purpose (C) of participation when describing the tasks of parent councils. Most actors mention the cooperation of parents and communication i.e. the identification of parent needs and parent opinions as crucial tasks of a parent council. The aim in identifying parents’ needs and stakeholders’ opinion is the improvement of school quality, not the enhancement of the acceptance and legitimization of decisions. (traditional democratic purpose (A)).

The empirical results show that the task of political mobilization can more be seen as a political purpose (D) of participation than as a democratic one (A-C). Parents get sensitized, mobilized and can be instrumentalized by officials and headmasters. The communication task contains a political component as well if parent involvement is described as a form of
neutralizing parents’ school criticism. Participatory forums have thereby not just tasks with the aim to strengthen the input, process or output dimension of democracy. They can also have a political or power-related purpose. Democracy regarding the political purpose of participation is seen more as concept of power (Arendt 1991) than a way of life (Dewey 1993).

Experts stress obviously on output legitimacy by describing the tasks of parent councils. The school output should be enhanced through parents’ cooperation. Parental involvement is seen as stakeholder participation fitting the NPM-paradigm as customer satisfaction is mentioned as a crucial task of a parent council. The aim of a parent council is to improve school quality i.e. the school climate and an efficient and effective use of parents’ resources instead of the enhancement of acceptance of political decisions either on a cantonal, local rather than on a school level. After describing the tasks of participatory forums in school governance I analyze the institutional and economic criteria of school boards and parent councils.

4.3 Criteria of Validity of Participatory Forums in Zurich

Institutional criteria of validity include the representativeness and participants’ co-determination rights. Economic criteria contain performance, efficiency, effectiveness, and cost-reduction. I describe first the criteria of school boards, second the criteria of parent councils. Finally I compare the tasks and criteria of participatory forums in Zurich’s school governance to give evidence about their potential to deepen democracy.

4.3.1 Institutional & Economical Criteria of Zurich’s School Boards

Participants’ representativeness and their co-determination rights are crucial institutional criteria regarding the input-potential of school boards. The more representative a participatory council is, the bigger is its potential to strengthen input legitimacy since representativeness enhances the acceptance of decisions.

A first criterion of representativeness is the status (1) of a school board member. Participants are citizens, they represent the whole citizenship but foreigners are excluded. School boards are secondly located on the municipal level (2). Members of school boards represent the whole population of a municipality or a city district. Third delegates get elected (3). It can happen that in rural and suburban municipalities no election takes place because of recruitment problems. The composition (4) of school boards relies fourthly on the informal selection criterion of party membership. In urban municipalities all big parties are
represented in the council. Unemployed or part-time working citizens are overrepresented since the job is time-consuming. Interviewed experts estimate fifth the ability (5) of school board members to generalize and the promotion of public goods as good, because the interests of the entire municipality are represented and a direct connection of participant with school is not systematically necessary. The continuity (6) of the forum is good as there is no formal limit of participation-period for school board members. Abilities of participants and continuity are linked. The longer a member participates in a participatory forum the more experiences and knowledge they have. Ability of participants is also linked to the level of participation: the more people are covered by the council, the higher is the degree of generalization.

Regarding the co-determination rights, school boards have far-reaching competences. The more co-determination rights a participatory council has, the bigger is its potential to strengthen input legitimacy. School boards have decision-making authority (a) in personnel, financial and organization matters. School boards influence (b) the job creation of teachers and headmasters, as well as pedagogical matters like introducing steps of special schooling together with headmasters and parents. School boards have a consulting role (c) for teachers and headmasters by presenting them an external view of laymen. Finally school boards are involved (d) in school events and projects.

In total, Zurich’s school boards have extensive co-determination rights in local school governance although there is a gap between small rural and big urban regions where the hierarchical structure is more complex. One actor explained the requirement to provide local school boards with co-determination rights, arguing that citizen would not join a local layman council if they do not have the power to decide in crucial areas (association of school boards_ZH 2012: 36). This declaration clearly refers to the input potential of school boards as one reason for citizens to join school boards is its co-determination rights in local decision-making processes in school governance.

School boards are representative because they represent the whole citizenship of a municipality. Recruitment is not a problem because membership in a school council is prestigious since participants have co-determination rights. Their work is paid, even though with a symbolic salary. Participants represent the interests of the whole municipality because selection is related to party-membership. The ability of participants to generalize is considered well since participants do not have structurally required connections with school
and they represent the entire municipality. The negative aspect of school boards is that foreigners have no possibility to participate in a local school council.

Regarding the **economic criteria** of school boards, they contribute to improve school performance (1) through legalized inspection, supervision, and support of school staff. The bigger the effect (on performance, efficiency, effectiveness and costs) of a participatory council, the bigger is its potential to strengthen output legitimacy. School boards enhance efficiency and effectiveness (2) through communication and mediation and reduce costs (3) through low-cost layman workforce in local school governance. A negative aspect of school boards regarding economic criteria could be that efficiency can be reduced if personal conflicts occur between school staff and school board members. School board members are paid and need special trainings and workshops provided by the education department.

In sum school boards are considered as representative because of their political mandate and their inclusiveness, the only negative aspect is that municipal residents without a Swiss citizenship, who are interested in school policy, cannot participate in public school boards. Economically they can enhance school quality and climate through inspection, supervision, support and communication. But one should not forget that interpersonal relations are no less important factors of public participation potential to enhance school quality.

### 4.3.2 Institutional & Economic Criteria of Zurich’s Parent Councils

Concerning the **institutional criteria** of **representativeness** the status (1) of parent councils is related to parenthood. Participants are parents of a child of one particular school and foreigners are included. Parent councils are located on the school level (2). Members of parent councils represent the whole parenthood of one school. Third, delegates get sometimes elected (3) but recruitment problems are obvious since the participation in parent councils is time-consuming and not prestigious. Fourth, the composition of school boards does in most cases not rely on informal selection criteria (4). Foreigners are underrepresented and active parents overrepresented. Interviewed experts estimate fifth the ability of parent council members to generalize as middling because of the personal connection between parents and children. The risk that parents represent more the interest of their own child and his class than the interests of the whole school entity exists. On the other hand some schools excluded parents who represent particular interests. The continuity (6) of the forum is poor as rotation after one school class is inherent.
Regarding the co-determination rights of parent councils, participants have almost no decision-making authority (a). School boards influence (b) is very restrictive and highly dependent on local organization since parental involvement is regulated subsidiary. Whether parent councils have a consulting (c) role for teachers and headmasters or not is a controversial discussion among the interviewed experts. The majority of experts believe that parents have more an inspirational than a consultative role for school staff. Finally parent councils are involved (d) in school events, projects, workshops and external evaluation.

Recapitulatory parent councils are only representative for parents of one school. Problems of recruitment are considerable due to the fact that the assignment in a parent council is time-consuming, unpaid and not prestigious. Since selection is rarely linked to informal selection criteria – because of problems of recruitment – participants represent the interests of the whole school to a moderate extent. The ability of participants to generalize is considered modest since participants have structural required connection to school and represent only one school entity. The positive aspect of parent councils is that parents without Swiss citizenship are included in parent councils.

Regarding the economic criteria of parent councils, they contribute to improve school performance (1) by giving low-cost feedback. They enhance efficiency and effectiveness (2) through communication and mediation and reduce costs on the basis of low-cost parental workforce (3). A negative aspect of parent councils is that efficiency, same as in school councils, is reduced if personal conflicts occur between school staff and parent council members. Teachers, headmasters and school boards can be faced with extra work to help parents by organizing themselves. Interviewed experts deem effects of parent councils on student’s performance as unobvious but effects on school climate are evident.

In sum parent councils are poorly representative of the entire municipal population because they include only stakeholders. The only positive aspect regarding input legitimacy is that parents without a Swiss citizenship, who are interested in school policy, can participate in parent councils. They have almost no co-determination rights, neither on a local nor on a school level. Economically parent councils can enhance school quality and climate through feedback and communication, and reduce costs in school governance through parental cooperation.

As we have seen, school boards as well as parent councils have a different potential to strengthen democracy. To illustrate the function of participatory forums in Swiss school
governance and their democratic potential I compare school boards and parent councils regarding their tasks and criteria of validity in the following passage.

4.4 Comparison of School boards and Parent Councils

The tasks of school boards and parent councils differ from each other. While school boards have legally defined tasks to guide local school governance, parent councils have no juridical-definite assignment.

Interviewed experts acknowledge that parent councils support schools with their engagement and mediation role. They improve school quality by bringing in parent’s opinion, enhance school climate through mediation and customer satisfaction by identifying parents’ needs. In sum parent councils’ tasks strengthen the output legitimacy of democracy in school governance by contributing to the improvement of performance, effectiveness, efficiency and cost-reduction of local schools through cooperation and communication. Like parent councils, school boards contribute to school climate through mediation. In contrast to parent councils with no fixed tasks school boards have a juridical vocation and a political mandate to assure local school quality through supervision and inspection.

Parent councils have also an emancipatory purpose by providing trainings and workshops for parents which contribute to the empowerment of parents and the throughput legitimacy of democracy. School boards have no task that explicitly enhances the empowerment of citizens. Indirectly school council members could learn a lot about democratic rules by participating in a layman council. But tasks of school boards show that empowerment of citizens seems not to be the aim of school boards.

Parent council tasks show that the purpose of this kind of participatory forum is to improve school quality and to a minor extent parents’ empowerment but not the enhancement of co-determination in political decision (input legitimacy). School boards on the other hand have broad strategically i.e. organizational, financial and personnel responsibilities. The intention of providing a layman council with extensive strategic and personnel responsibilities is to enhance the acceptance of decisions i.e. input legitimization. School board delegates ensure checks and balance in local school governance by providing local school staff an outside perspective and representing as municipality member the view of the public. School boards also have to justify their strategic decisions in the public and to assure accountability of local schools. While school board tasks consider a traditional democratic idea parent council’s
tasks have in contrast not the purpose not to strengthen input legitimacy but to enhance output and process quality in school governance.

Besides the potential of participatory forum to strengthen democracy, they can rather have a political purpose. Parent councils bear the potential to sensitize and mobilize parents. Parents can be instrumentalized by officials and headmasters for their political intentions due to the fact that there is an information gap between experts and laymen. The communication task contains a political component as well if parent involvement is described as a form of neutralizing parents’ school criticism.

Table 4 shows the main tasks of school boards and parent councils and their potential to strengthen input, throughput and output legitimacy of democracy as well as the power of cantonal administration and headmasters.

Table 4: Tasks of School Boards & Parent Councils: Democratic & Political Advantage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential / Tasks</th>
<th>Parent Council’s Task</th>
<th>School Board’s Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratic (Input)</td>
<td>Integration of Foreigners</td>
<td>Local Guidance, Checks &amp; Balances, Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emancipatory (Throughput)</td>
<td>Trainings &amp; Workshops = Empowerment Democratic Rules = Democracy Learning</td>
<td>Democratic Rules = Democracy Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic (Output)</td>
<td>Cooperation &amp; Communication</td>
<td>Assessment &amp; Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political (Power)</td>
<td>Sensibilization &amp; Instrumentalization</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By comparing the criteria of validity of participatory forums in Zurich’s school governance can be asserted that, regarding representativeness, the status (1) of participants in school boards and parent councils is different. School boards exclude municipality inhabitants without Swiss citizenship and parent councils exclude all citizens without children in a compulsory school age. Second, participation takes place on a different level (2); participation in school boards takes place on municipal level and that in parent councils on school level. Therefore school boards represent a bigger population than parent councils.

Problems of recruitment (3) involve parent councils as well as school boards. A “silent selection” can take place if interested people get directly elected because of a lack of concurrence. As school board tasks includes more responsibility and are consequently more prestigious than parent council tasks, problems of recruitment are more obvious in parent councils than in school boards.

Regarding internal composition (4) of participatory forums school boards bear a bigger potential for input legitimacy than parent councils because participants in school boards often represent the entire political spectrum. Parent councils can theoretically fulfill a
corrective role because they do not exclude foreigners; de facto parents without citizenship are underrepresented in parent councils.

Concerning the abilities (5) of laymen, school board members are considered a higher degree of abstraction: School board members are accountable towards the entire population of a municipality but delegates of parent councils are responsible only towards the parents of one school. The danger, that parents’ engagement for the interests of their own kids is bigger than of common good of the school is obvious due to the fact that parents’ connections with their own kids is closer than with school. Parents as stakeholders must have children in school by definition. The danger that school boards delegates engage for particular interests is minor because school board participants have a political mandate and are accountable towards the public of the entire municipality.

School board as well as parent council members’ know-how in pedagogy or management can be either considerable or poor. Expertise is per definition not a selection criterion for layman councils. Lots of interviewed actors desire a better qualification of laymen which leads to a paradox regarding the definition of militia-participation. Since the implementation of school autonomy headmasters hold operative and school boards strategic competences in local school governance. The education department’s recommendation for school autonomy (what is nowadays called guided school) says that school board delegates need adequate management competences to fulfill their management role (Education Department 2010: 05). This remark confirms the paradox that know-how cannot be a selection criterion for layman councils but the guidance of public school requires a significant amount of management know-how since school governance is getting more complex.

The continuity (6) of school boards is bigger than in parent councils which include systematic rotation of participants every three or six years. Ideally parents begin to participate in Kindergarten (two years) and join parent councils in primary (six years) as well as in secondary school (3 years). The longer parents participate the higher is their experience and know-how.

In sum school boards are more representative than parent councils because of the status of citizens that includes a bigger population as well as the level where participation in school boards takes place, informal selection criteria, the higher ability of participant of school boards to generalize and the higher continuity of the forum.
The co-determination rights between school boards and parent councils also vary significantly. Parent councils with almost no decision-making authority (a), are considered to have not much influence (b) and no consulting role (c) but are involved (d) in school projects and school events. On the other hand school boards have decision-making authority (a) in crucial areas like the personnel, organizational, and financial management, they influence (b) most local strategic school matters, have a consulting role (c) for school staff and are also involved (d) in school events and some projects. Table 5 includes institutional criteria which demonstrate the potential of participatory forums to strengthen input legitimacy.

Tab 5: Institutional Criteria of School Boards & Parent Councils in Swiss School Governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Criteria / Type of Forum</th>
<th>School Board</th>
<th>Parent Council</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>+Citizens</td>
<td>-Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Foreigners</td>
<td>+Foreigners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Municipality</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>+Selection</td>
<td>-Self-selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition</td>
<td>+Party</td>
<td>-No informal Selection Criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>+Common Good</td>
<td>-Particular Interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity</td>
<td>+High</td>
<td>-Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-determination</td>
<td>+Decision-making Authority</td>
<td>-Decision-making Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+Influence</td>
<td>-Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+Consulting</td>
<td>-Consulting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+Involvement</td>
<td>+Involvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The biggest variance between traditional school boards and newly-institutionalized parent councils is – regarding institutional criteria – that school boards bear a political mandate and significant co-determination rights like the employment and assessment of school staff. Regarding Wampler (2008), Fung (2006), Fung and Wright (2001) as well as Biedermann and Oser (2010) participatory forums cannot strengthen the input legitimacy if they have no co-determination rights. In this sense the potential of school boards to strengthen input legitimacy in school governance is high and that of parent councils is poor. If only institutional criteria are considered, parent involvement can be described as “pseudo participation.”

If economic criteria are included school boards and parent councils have the same potential to strengthen output legitimacy of school governance. School boards have a juridical obligation to assure school quality (1) through inspection, supervision and support. Parent councils can contribute to the improvement of school quality by providing feedback. Since feedback from parent councils is voluntarily it contains not the same importance like school
boards inspection and supervision. Both participatory forums enhance efficiency and effectiveness (2) of school by improving school climate through mediation. School boards as well as parent councils reduce costs (3) by providing low-cost layman workforce. Since school board members are paid, parent councils are more favorable. But it has to be considered that parent involvement is regulated subsidiary and can vary heavily from one school to another. Some parent councils are very active and others not. Inactive parent councils are sometimes described as “alibi exercise” (education council_ZH 2012: 192). Parent councils are not completely established in Zurich’s school governance. The integrative potential of including foreigners as well as other potentials of parent councils has not been fully utilized yet. Parent councils can degenerate to a BBB-association (baking, barbecue and building hand work) and meet just once a year which is interpreted from certain actors as alibi exercise. Other experts rate it positively if parents see no need for involvement in a school. Furthermore they see baking as respectable offer of service for school. Table 6 includes economic criteria which demonstrate the potential of participatory forums to strengthen output legitimacy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Criteria / Type of Forum</th>
<th>School Board</th>
<th>Parent Council</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>+Assessment</td>
<td>-Opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency &amp; Effectiveness</td>
<td>+Communication</td>
<td>+Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>-Workforce (paid)</td>
<td>+Workforce (unpaid)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parent councils’ potential to strengthen input legitimacy is low in comparison with school boards but their potential to strengthen output legitimacy is theoretically almost the same. In the next passage I describe the relation between school boards and parent councils and whether parent councils are a complementary or a substitutive element to school boards.

4.5 Relation between traditional School Boards and new Parent Councils in Zurich

Parent councils and school boards are not seen as concurrent since their tasks differ a lot. Interviewed experts agree that parent councils and school boards are not directly comparable because they did not act on the same level. The relationship between school board members and parent council’s delegates is described as positive because competences are clearly defined and they did not interfere in their counterparts’ responsibility area.

Parent councils can be a “vessel of recruitment” for school boards. Therefore participation in parent councils can produce spillover effects: The engagement in parent councils enhances
the interests for school matters and the desire to influence local school governance. If children of parent delegates leave public school, parents could continue their engagement for school matters in school boards by representing the interests of the entire municipality and not just one school entity. In sum parent councils did not replace the tasks of school boards but are a substitute forum.
5 Conclusion: Layman Participation from Input to Output Legitimacy

This article addressed the question whether the public participation and the understanding of democracy in Swiss school governance is changing. By examining the function i.e. tasks as well as institutional and economic criteria of old and new participatory forums in Zurich’s school governance I demonstrated how the understanding of layman participation and democracy in Swiss school governance is changing.

The comparison of school boards and parent councils shows that school boards have a traditionally democratic purpose while parent councils have a more economic rationale. Parent councils can strengthen output legitimacy through cooperation and communication in the same way school boards do. But in contrast to parent councils school boards possess a political mandate to evaluate local schools. School boards are more representative than parent councils and have in contrast to parent councils substantial co-determination rights, therefore their potential to strengthen input legitimacy is high while that of parent councils is low.

My paper however demonstrated first a change from input legitimacy to output legitimacy in school governance by using the example of changes in Swiss layman participation. A change from public participation to stakeholder participation is indicated through the new institutionalization of parent councils. Before institutionalization, parents were not recognized as actors in school governance. Therefore stakeholder participation and thereby output legitimacy has increased in Zurich’s school governance.

On the other hand school boards on the district level have been disposed of and competences of local school boards have been reduced to strategic management. Hence public participation and input legitimacy has been reduced in Zurich’s school governance. The evaluation task of school boards on the district level had been overtaken by a new professional cantonal agency, the office of external evaluation and the operative management by newly institutionalized headmasters. Through the institutionalization of local headmasters and a cantonal office of external evaluation, two new actors with an expert status had been introduced to Zurich’s school governance. Expertise encourages the output legitimacy of a system: hierarchical, operative management of experts (headmasters) should enhance effectiveness and efficiency of schools and improve school quality.

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7 Altrichter and Maag Merki (2010a: 35, 403) demonstrate the change from input to output legitimacy in school governance of German-speaking countries as well.
Professional evaluation with standards and indicators, defined by the education department, should improve school quality. Therefore professionalization and output legitimacy of Zurich’s school governance has been enhanced and co-determination rights of school boards i.e. the public cut down which weakens the input legitimacy in school governance.

If on one side traditional school boards in Swiss school governance lose competences and on the other hand parent councils are newly institutionalized, a change from public participation to stakeholder participation is indicated. This change of public participation to stakeholder participation corresponds to a deep change of understanding of democracy, a change from input legitimacy to output legitimacy in Swiss school governance which considerably influences the understanding of public in policy. Public in school governance includes nowadays not only citizens but also stakeholders.

Intuitively, public participation is understood as a form to enhance public co-determination rights and it would thus enhance the input legitimacy of the political system. My paper showed secondly that it is misleading to consider only input legitimacy when the function of participatory forums and their potential to deepen democracy is examined. If only input legitimacy is considered, parent councils have no potential to deepen democracy and are described as pseudo participatory forums. Even thought parent councils bear the potential to strengthen output legitimacy via communication and cooperation.

Parent involvement can in an output perspective be seen as a democratic innovation because parents’ resources can be used more easily than before their institutionalization. In process perspective parent councils contribute to parents’ empowerment by contributing to parent education. In an input perspective parent councils are a democratic innovation because parents without citizenship are allowed to participate in the council.

However parent involvement should not be idealized. Their significance is – beneath their potential to improve school climate – considered as modest. Parent councils see themselves confronted with problems of recruitment. If the understanding of citizenship is changing from a republican to a liberal one, the system of militia per se is in danger because people have no time and are not interested in unpaid work.

Third I figured out that participation can have other purposes than the deepening of democracy (see Haikiö 2012). Parents become sensitized by getting an inside perspective of schools through participating in a parent council. By giving parents more participation opportunities officials can take them “the wind out of the sail”: If parents want to criticize
school, they can become part of the parent council. However, parents’ identification with the school improves. Parents therefore support school by acting in concert.

The word participation suggests instinctively an enhancement of co-determination rights and input legitimacy. But parent councils did not have co-determination rights. For officials a win-win situation is produced by introducing parent councils: Parents think that they have more participation rights, which in an economic sense is true, without having more decision-making authority (in contrast school boards have fewer competences). On the other side the enhancement of parent’s rights increases at the same time parents’ responsibilities. Parents get sensitized for school matters as defined by officials, because local and cantonal officials have an information monopoly. The term “participation” suggests in this case false association (input instead of output legitimacy) and elites can benefit from that. Officials can profit from parents’ resources without giving them more co-determination rights in an input-manner (see Boyle/Silver 2005).

In sum participatory forums can have a traditional democratic, an emancipatory, an economic as well as a political purpose. Public participation in Swiss school governance is changing from a traditional democratic idea to an economic function. In accordance to Kussau (2002: 49), the policy of autonomy is demand- or costumer oriented in contrast to bureaucratic governance. Costumer orientation in education policy causes a task-shifting from public to governmental sector. Schools idea is hence changing from an integrative republican institution (Criblez 1998) to a customer-oriented institution (Kussau 2002: 95).
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