Political Dynasties, Electoral Institutions and Politicians’ Human Capital

Benny Geys
Norwegian Business School BI, NO

ABSTRACT

Scholarship on political dynasties predominantly studies when and why such dynasties arise and/or persist. In contrast, this article focuses on political dynasties’ potential consequences, and particularly investigates whether they lead to the selection of dynastic politicians with relatively lower education levels. Empirically, I exploit a legal change in Italian local electoral institutions in 1993, which awarded significantly more power to mayors in the selection of aldermen and vice-mayors (law 81/1993). The analysis – which covers almost 540,000 Italian local politicians active during the period 1985-2012 – indicates that a political selection process controlled by politicians rather than the electorate favours dynastic individuals with relatively lower levels of education.