

Reconciling Expertise and Inclusivity: A Proposal for a Dual-Ballot Electoral System Based on Educational Attainment

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Abstract: *This paper advocates for the implementation of a dual-ballot electoral system wherein the initial voting round is exclusively conducted by individuals possessing at least a bachelor's degree. This educated electorate would select two candidates from a pool representing all political parties. Subsequently, the general population would determine the final winner in a second voting round. The proposed system aims to balance informed candidate selection with broad democratic participation. Through data analysis and examination of existing electoral frameworks, this study explores the potential benefits and challenges of such a system, emphasizing its implications for democratic representation and governance.*

Keywords: dual-ballot voting, democratic participation, educated electorate, electoral reform, political representation

1. Introduction

The integrity and efficacy of electoral systems are pivotal to the health of democratic societies. Traditional voting mechanisms often grapple with challenges related to voter competence, representation, and legitimacy. This paper proposes a dual-ballot system designed to harness the expertise of educated citizens in the candidate selection process while preserving the inclusive nature of general elections. The first ballot, restricted to individuals with at least a bachelor's degree, would nominate two candidates from all participating parties. The general electorate would then choose between these candidates in the second ballot. This approach seeks to combine informed decision-making with mass participation, potentially enhancing electoral outcomes.

2. Literature Review

Two-round electoral systems (TRS) are employed globally to ensure that elected officials command majority support. In such systems, if no candidate achieves an absolute majority in the first round, a second round is held between the top contenders. Studies indicate that TRS can influence voter behavior, encouraging strategic voting where individuals cast ballots not solely based on preference but also on candidates' perceived viability.

The role of voter education in electoral participation has been extensively examined. Higher educational attainment is consistently linked to increased political engagement and a better understanding of complex policy issues. However, the concept of restricting electoral processes based on educational qualifications remains contentious, with debates centered on democratic inclusivity and potential elitism.

3. Methodology

To assess the viability of the proposed dual-ballot system, this study conducts a comparative analysis of existing two-round systems and evaluates the correlation between voter education levels and electoral outcomes. Data from countries

employing TRS, such as France and Brazil, are analyzed to discern patterns in voter behavior, turnout, and candidate success rates. Additionally, statistical models are employed to simulate scenarios wherein the first voting round is limited to degree-holders, examining potential shifts in candidate selection and overall election results.

4. Data Analysis

An analysis of electoral data from France's presidential elections reveals that TRS often leads to strategic alliances between political parties between rounds, aiming to consolidate support and secure a majority in the runoff. In Brazil, studies have shown that voter beliefs and strategic considerations significantly influence choices in two-round elections, with education playing a role in voters' ability to navigate these dynamics.

Simulating an education-restricted first round indicates that candidates emphasizing policy depth and expertise may have an advantage, given the evaluative criteria of a more educated electorate. However, this raises concerns about representational equity, as candidates appealing to broader, less-educated demographics might be disadvantaged.

5. Discussion

Implementing a dual-ballot system with an education-based first round presents several advantages:

- 1) **Informed Candidate Selection:** An electorate with higher educational qualifications may be better equipped to assess candidates' competencies and policy proposals critically.
- 2) **Enhanced Policy Focus:** Candidates might prioritize substantive policy discussions over populist rhetoric to appeal to the educated selectors.
- 3) **Majority Legitimacy:** The two-round structure ensures that the eventual winner has majority support from the general populace.

However, potential drawbacks warrant careful consideration:

- 1) **Democratic Inclusivity:** Excluding segments of the population from the initial voting phase challenges the principle of equal participation in democratic processes.
- 2) **Elitism and Bias:** The system may inadvertently favor socioeconomic groups with greater access to higher education, perpetuating existing inequalities.
- 3) **Legal and Ethical Concerns:** Implementing educational prerequisites for voting could face constitutional challenges and ethical debates regarding voter disenfranchisement.

6. Conclusion

The proposed dual-ballot electoral system endeavors to integrate informed candidate selection with broad democratic participation. While the approach offers potential benefits in enhancing the quality of electoral choices, it also raises significant concerns about inclusivity and equity. Further empirical research and pilot programs are essential to evaluate the practical implications of such a system. Ultimately, any electoral reform must carefully balance the goals of informed decision-making and the foundational democratic principle of universal suffrage.

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