



**3rd International Conference
on Public Policy (ICPP3)
June 28-30, 2017 – Singapore**

Panel T10P04 Session 1

Methodological Challenges for Policy Elites Analysis

Title of the paper

Political Mobility of Chinese County-level Elites:
An Empirical Analysis of 532 County Party Secretaries

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28 June 2017

Abstract

This study examines the political mobility of Chinese county-level elites. Using the biographical data of 532 incumbent county party secretaries, statistical description first demonstrates the group characteristics of these county leaders. Based on this, regression analysis shows the effect of personal characteristics, intellectual ability, occupational competence, and *guanxi* on their promotion speed. Empirical results suggest that young and better-educated cadres become rising stars of local politics, whereas many senior cadres with richer working experiences or more technical expertise fall behind in the promotion competition; moreover, *guanxi* factors still exert influences on local cadre selection. To address these problems and better achieve the goal of choosing good leaders, the optimization of cadre evaluation mechanism and motivation system as well as the reinforcement of official virtue would be the main concerns of the future cadre and personnel system reform.

Keywords: political promotion, Chinese county party secretary, local cadre selection