ABSTRACT

As the most significant GHG emitter, China can substantially contribute to the global climate change mitigation through decarbonising its coal-dominated energy system. This research is concerned with the policy pathway that guides the low-carbon energy transition in China, giving attention to policy instruments' timing and sequencing. Based on data collected from 1981 to 2020 from policy documents, we examined policy changes associated with China's energy transition and then use visual analytical tools to present the overall policy evolution trajectory and incremental institutional changes. This research demonstrates the temporal features of policy instruments and actor networks and provides empirical evidence on policy sequencing practices, revealing the in-depth policy development mechanisms during China's low-carbon transition. Policy instruments have been introduced in certain sequences to gradually expand renewable energy industries and curb emission-intensive energy technologies. Since China is moving towards further energy transition and decarbonisation, deliberation on policy sequencing and packaging would be critical to loosen policy obstacles and enhance implementation effectiveness. China's practices shed light on other developing countries that pursue energy transitions at different industrialisation stages. This research also contributes to the policy studies as it analysed and visualised temporal aspects of policy changes and actor networks based on textual data, suggesting the usability of visual analytics tools for policy evolution studies.