C. C Hendricks et al. (2024)
Public Enterprise
Volume *28*(2), 2024
https://doi.org/10.21571/pehyj.2024.2802.05

International Center for Promotion of Enterprises
ICPE

Institutional Discursive Power in Federal Public Enterprises: A Framework for Evaluating State-Centre Dynamics

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Abstract

This study examines the dynamics of institutional discursive power within federal public enterprises, focusing on the intricate relationships between central and state-level institutions. Drawing upon Foucault's theoretical framework of discursive power and contemporary institutional theory, we develop a comprehensive evaluation model that analyses three key dimensions: competitiveness, constructiveness, and influence. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative analysis of institutional communications with quantitative assessment of organisational performance metrics. Our evaluation framework, validated through case studies of Indian central public sector enterprises, reveals that institutional discursive power operates through complex mechanisms of policy formulation, resource allocation, and narrative control. The findings demonstrate that while federal enterprises possess significant structural advantages through superior resource access and policy leverage, state enterprises can effectively exercise relational power through strategic institutional engagement. The study contributes to both theoretical understanding and practical governance by providing a systematic framework for evaluating institutional discursive power in federal systems, offering insights into how public enterprises at different governmental

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levels can optimise their institutional effectiveness while maintaining constitutional equilibrium.

KEYWORDS: Institutional discursive power, federal public enterprises, organisational dynamics, institutional theory, state-centre relations, policy discourse

Introduction

In federal countries, most subjects that directly affect the people are devolved to the states. Yet the fedral governments too have ministries dealing with these subjects. Their role is not limited to inter-state coordination. Since revenues accruing to the federal government are much higher than those of state governments, federal ministry also provide money to state government departments to further national prioritis. Public enterprises exist both at state level and at the cenral level. While there is extensive literature on relationship between the federal governments and state governments, less is available on the relationship between the central public enterprises and state public enterprises.

In India, some examples of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) operating in almost every area within the domain of the states. In food and agriculture, while it's a state subject, we have CPSEs like National Seeds Corporation, State Farms Corporation of India, Food Corporation of India and National Warehousing Corporation. In healthcare, another state subject, central enterprises include Bengal Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals Limited and HLL Lifecare Limited.

Even in a small state sector like fisheries, the CPSEs are active. CPSEs in the field are:

1. National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) - Headquartered in Hyderabad, it promotes integrated development of fisheries across India

2. Fishery Survey of India (FSI) - Focuses on surveying fishery resources in India's Exclusive Economic Zone

3. Central Institute of Fisheries Nautical and Engineering Training (CIFNET) - Provides training in marine fisheries

4. Central Institute of Coastal Engineering for Fishery (CICEF) - Handles engineering aspects of fisheries projects

5. National Institute of Fisheries Post Harvest Technology and Training (NIFPHATT) - Works on post-harvest technology

Each state has its own public enterprise for fisheries development with varying structures. These state-level public enterprises typically handl implementation of central and state schemes, licensing and regulation of fishing activities, development of local fisheries infrastructure, support to fishing communities and marketing and distribution of fish products. The relationship between

national and state-level fisheries enterprises in India follows a cooperative federalism model with distinct yet interconnected roles. The CPSEs provides funding through various schemes. Many schemes follow a cost-sharing model between center and states. Mostly state public enterprises have their own schemes using state funds. National institutions like NFDB and FSI provide technical expertise and training to state-level organizations Research findings and technological innovations from CPSEs are shared with state public enterprises in the field. CPSEs help build capacity of state-level staff through training programmess. Data on fish production, exports, and other metrics flows from states to CPSUs which is useful for sectoral planning at the national level. While state-level fisheries enterprises don't have direct control over central enterprises, they do have some influence through various mechanisms, e,g., state representation in national-level advisory bodies and committees, participation in periodic national conferences and consultations where they can voice concerns and suggestions, providing feedback on central schemes' implementation challenges, suggesting modifications to central programs based on local needs and contributing to policy formulation through state-specific data and experiences. However, significant limitations exist as they have no direct administrative control over CPSE offices located in the states, cannot influence organisational structure or staffing. The have a limited say in budget allocation and financial decisions of central enterprises and no control over research priorities.

This example illustrates an interesting dynamic where these CPSEs operate in domains constitutionally assigned to states, working in coordination with state public enterprises. Their role is typically supportive - providing expertise, resources, or services that complement state efforts rather than superseding state authority. In recent years, scholars have endeavored to incorporate principles from evaluation science into discursive power research, aiming to provide novel perspectives for applying discursive powertheory in fisheries fisheries (Hu, 2013; Lu, 2023; Zou, 2020).

Discursive Power

Within federal public enterprises, discursive power manifests through the capacity to shape narratives, norms, and policy agendas across state public enterprises. This power is often wielded through mechanisms such as policy papers, communiqués, and formal declarations, which serve to legitimise certain perspectives whilst marginalising others. The efficacy of such discursive strategies is contingent upon the federal public enterprise's perceived legitimacy, its structural composition, and the geopolitical dynamics of the country. Notably, the interplay between institutional discourses

and the states' interests can engender complex negotiation processes, potentially leading to the emergence of hybrid discursive frameworks that reflect both supranational and national priorities.

According to current research, discursive power can be divided into two categories: institutional discursive power and discursive power of public opinion (Chen & Wang, 2016). On national scale, within comprehensive or specialised organisations, the enhancement of institutional discursive power remains a pivotal topic. In recent years, scholars have endeavoured to incorporate principles from evaluation science into discursive power research, aiming to provide novel perspectives for applying discursive power theory across various fields (Ren, et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2021,2022). Building upon this foundation, this study seeks to construct an evaluation model based on discursive power theory, aiming to assess and compare the institutional discursive power of state public enterprises within federal public enterprise, thereby offering theoretical support for them to further elevate its institutional discursive power within the federal enterprises.

The concept of institutional discursive power lacks a unified definition at present. However, scholars generally concur that institutional discursive power is a form of discursive power manifested through institutional formation (Gao, 2016). Discursive Power The concept of discursive power originates from the integration of "discourse", a linguistic notion, and "power", a political notion, initially proposed by the French philosopher Michel Foucault. Within the theoretical framework of discursive power, Foucault's perspective that "discourse is power" is most renowned. This viewpoint posits that discourse and power, through interaction, give rise to discursive power. Some scholars have further elucidated the process of interaction between discourse and power, asserting that within this dynamic process, power generates discourse, and discourse expands power. Building upon this foundation, scholars have basically reached a consensus on the connotation and definition of discursive power. They perceive discursive power as the capability, exercised through discourse, to alter the thoughts and actions of others. Some scholars, leveraging the theoretical framework of discourse and power, posit that discursive power encompasses such components as discourse subject, discourse content, discourse objects, discourse platform, and discourse effect. It is important to note that Foucault's notion of discursive power refers to the power that emanates from the dominion of discourse, denoting the "effect of speech" rather than the "right to speak".

Institutional Discursive Power.

The essence of institutional discursive power revolves around two core components of "discursive power" and "institution". By merging discursive power theory with institutional theory,

scholars have unravelled a nuanced and profound interpretation of institutional discursive power. Joseph S. Nye (2008) asserts that beyond cultural values, institutions represent the third major source of discursive power, underscoring the intrinsic connection between discursive power and institutions. In contrast to other new institutionalisms, discursive institutionalism places a notable emphasis on the role of discourse in shaping institutions (Schmidt, 2008). It posits that institutions are rooted not in hierarchical structures or formal arrangements, but rather in shared communicative interactions. Moreover, institutions are moulded through the dissemination of ideas within established frameworks (Peters, 2019). Building upon the formed theoretical foundations, some researchers have endeavoured to define the concept of institutional discursive power through combing components of discursive power and shaping institutions. Highlighting the process of discourse effect generated from discourse content and platform, which illustrates the path to realise institutional discursive power.

From the aforementioned definitions, it is clear that the distinctive essence of institutional discursive power lies in the fact that its emergence is rooted in international systems and contingent upon the characteristics and influence of these systems, setting it apart from other forms of discursive power. At its core, from the perspective of power composition, institutional discursive power embodies a combination of discursive power and institutional power, constituting a potent form of compound power. Discursive power can be understood simply as power derived from the output of discourse, emphasizing the entirety of the process from the discourse subject to the discourse effect. In contrast, institutional power pertains to the capacity to indirectly guide and constrain the behaviours of others through institutions (Krasner, 1982).

Institutions encompass components such as norms, regulations, rules, and decision-making procedures, characterised by a broad scope of influence, long duration, and strong acceptability. However, by transforming discourse into power in the form of institutions, the potency of discursive power is enhanced. This is akin to overlaying institutional power upon discursive power, amplifying the energy generated in the phase of discourse output and significantly elevating discourse effects. Thus, institutional power serves as a safeguard for discursive power. institutional discursive power is also a fusion of structural power and relational power, serving as a concentrated manifestation of the conversion of the discourse subject's strength and discourse output capacity into power (Strange, 2015). Structural power refers to the capability to shape and determine various global structures, political or economic (Guzzini, 1993). It emanates from the strength and status of actors within the system, quantifiable through "hard power" such as political, economic, and technological prowess.

Structural power is characterised by its "indirect institutional, non-intentional, and non-individual creativity" nature.

Opportunity for smaller and poorer states

Robust political strength of a state often yields greater influence, transitioning imperceptibly into structural power, becoming an inherent advantage in a state's construction of federal systems. On the other hand, relational power accentuates interactions between actors driven by their respective preferences and expectations. It leverages national institutions to achieve control, influence, and domination over the actions of others. Unlike structural power, relational power emerges from interactions reoriented toward explicit objectives. It evolves along with the content and delivery of discourse during interactions, resulting in significant variability, rapid transformation, and multiple possibilities for change. Relational power can serve as a “subsequent empowerment” in a state's construction of national systems.

Institutional arrangements become a pivotal means for states to initiate dialogue, negotiate relationships, and exercise mutual constraints and influence. Often mastering institutional discursive power, bigger and richer states solidify the national order shaped by their unilateral value systems in institutional forms. Nonetheless, the foundational principles of intra-national relations advocated by the constitutions confer equal rights for all states to participate in the establishment of international institutions. Thus, smaller and poorer states possess the opportunity to alter the imbalance within the national order by participating in institutional development. Leveraging their specific advantages in certain domains, they can strategically pursue institutional discursive power, thereby achieving a reallocation of power and resources, facilitating the creation of a more conducive environment for their development through public enterprises.

Components of Institutional Discursive Power

Drawing upon discursive power and institutional discursive power theories, institutional discursive power within federal enterprises should encompass fundamental components such as discourse subjects, discourse platforms, discourse contents, discourse objects, and discourse effects. However, this study contends that the understanding of the institutional formation process is of significance to the analysis of institutional discursive power, and we have to understand that the process covers the transition from discourse contents to discourse effects and the transition requires the specific means for discourse delivery, which means that discourse content and discourse delivery can be integrated as discourse output for analysis. In light of this, the components constituting institutional discursive power within federal public enterprises are deemed to include their discourse

subjects, discourse platforms, discourse outputs, discourse objects, and discourse effects (cartensen et al., 2016; Peci et al., 2009).

(1) Discourse Subjects

While federal public enterprises encourage multifaceted participation to enhance cooperation between state public enterprises with vested interests, it is important to note that, according to the conventions of each federal public enterprise, usually state public enterprises do not possess voting rights.

(2) Discourse Platforms

Federal public enterprises discourse platforms refer to the conduits through which their discourse outputs are conveyed and which provide the settings for exercising discursive power. According to the rule of procedure of each federal public enterprise, main functional bodies, as well as specialised working groups, convene regular meetings, during which reports and proposals submitted by various committees are discussed for decision making.

(3) Discourse Outputs

Federal public enterprises discourse outputs refer to the delivery of discourse content with specific delivery means. Each federal public enterprise implements a number of management strategies Additionally, opinions and suggestions regarding the organisational operation and performance assessment of federal public enterprise also constitute significant discourse content. All these discourse content exert influence on institutional development. At various meetings, state public enterprises usually deliver such discourse content through proposals, suggestions, statements, reports, etc., in pursuit of acceptance and acknowledgment from other stakeholders.

(4) Discourse Objects

Federal public enterprise discourse objects refer to entities subject to the constraints imposed by rules ratified by it, thereby designating state public enterprises as the predominant discourse objects.

(5) Discourse Effects

The direct manifestation of federal public enterprises discourse effects is the conversion of discourse content from discourse subjects into enforceable rules. The proposals introduced by members undergo iterative deliberations and determinations, culminating in the establishment of rules possessing both binding force and substantive impact. The rules of engagement collectively reflect the consensus and feedback from state public enterprises to discourse subjects, leading to the generation of institutional discursive power within federal public enterprises (Thornborrow, 2014).

The formation of institutional discursive power within within federal public enterprises is a cyclical process determined by the interactions among its constituent.

Creation of institutional discursive power

The constituent components exert influence across these phases on the eventual configuration and potency of institutional discursive power

(1) Discourse Generation

The foundational prerequisite for the emergence of institutional discursive power within federal public enterprises is the generation of discourse intrinsically linked to their foundation. The generation of discourse hinges on the volition and capabilities of the discourse subjects themselves. Specifically, state public enterproses must exhibit an active and profound stewardship mentality in the establishment of procedures within the federal public enterprise, transcending mere follower roles. Furthermore, the generation of discourse that harmonises the attainment of fedral public enterprise management objectives with the pursuit of individual development needs mandates a robust research foundation, substantial research capabilities and research investment by state public enterprises. This process should occur in parallel with the understanding, from the perspective of state strategy, of the interplay between advancing states's own development agenda and participating in the construction of federal institutions. The generated discourse thus forms an essential prerequisite for attaining institutional discursive power within the federal public enterprises.

(2) Discourse Transmission

Discourse transmission refers to the entire process through which discourse is conveyed from discourse platforms to discourse objects, resulting in the generation of discourse effects. In other words, individual state public enterprises, adhering to the rules of procedure, convey their generated discourse to other state public enterprises and cooperating non-contracting parties through meetings at various levels. Discourse transmission constitutes the central phase in the formation of institutional discursive power.

(3) Discourse Feedback

Institutional discursive power within federal public enterprise operates through a feedback mechanism encompassing discourse effects, subjects, and outputs. This system is established when state public enterprises successfully translate their proposals and statements into binding rules. The resultant discourse effects reciprocally influence the members, potentially enhancing their credibility or resource allocation advantages. Even when discourse fails to become codified, the ensuing discussions still generate effects, prompting members to refine their discourse strategies.

Evaluating institutional discursive power necessitates a mixed-methods approach to analyse its distribution, emphasis, and composition. This methodology should aim to objectify discursive power, facilitating a more nuanced understanding of roles of state public enterprises in shaping the institutional framework, their relative strengths and weaknesses, and the anticipated trajectory of development. The evaluation framework, grounded in evaluation science principles, should primarily focus on discourse subjects, outputs, and effects, as discourse platforms and objects remain relatively constant. Drawing from extant discursive power evaluation systems and expert opinions from relevant sectors, an evaluation framework for institutional discursive power can be made. This approach seeks to comprehend and analyse the extent of mastery displayed by state public enterprises over this power and its composition, thereby rendering the concept more tangible and amenable to empirical research.

Dimensions of institutional discursive power evaluation

The dimensions are determined by the competitive strength of the discourse subjects, the constructive power of discourse outputs, and the influence of discourse effects. These three dimensions are further deconstructed layer by layer to identify evaluation components, followed by the determination of their specific components.

(3) Competitiveness

Competitiveness refers to the inherent capacity of state public enterprises as discourse subjects, embodying their structural power. Competitiveness exhibits in various forms and is assessed based on criteria such as representativeness and relevance. The comprehensive state power in political and economic domains demonstrates their national status and influence. Meanwhile, their capacity in production and governance reflects their competency to engage in national affairs. These two components, combine to form competitiveness, determining the starting point engagement in institutional formulation.

(2) Constructiveness

Constructiveness refers to the capability of state public enterprises to guide and propel the process of institutional formulation through their discourse outputs. This capability is manifested through agenda-setting, rule compliance, and rule shaping. They can directly participate in agenda-setting through proposals or indirectly through suggestions and declarations significantly influences their capacity to guide on prioritising management issues, formulating preservation and administration procedures, and evaluating management effectiveness, according to their interest preferences. Their credibility by meeting compliance standards can exert robust impetus on the

effective operation of the existing rules. Further, their research capacities, team dynamics, and language advantages also determine their capability to shape rules by proposing claims and interpreting regulations.

(3) Influence

Influence can be evaluated from two aspects: institutional transformation and degree of involvement. Institutional transformation refers to the efficiency with which the claims put forth by state public enterprises through discourse outputs can be translated into formal rules. Only the rules that become official management measures, resolutions, or recommendations possess a certain degree of binding force.

Construction of Evaluation Model

Based on the evaluation framework, this the three evaluation dimensions, namely, the competitiveness of the discourse subjects, the constructiveness of the discourse outputs, and the influence of the discourse effects, can be defined as tier 1 indicators. The evaluation components are identified as tier 2 indicators, and the components of them is further categorised as tier 3 indicators. Under this structure, a three-tiered evaluation indicator system is designed. Subsequently, weights can be assigned to the evaluation indicators at each tier, and data collection and analysis methods are developed to construct the evaluation model for institutional discursive power. Following the principles of systematicity, comprehensiveness, comparability, quantifiability, and operability as advocated by the theory of scientific evaluation, a three- tiered indicator system, comprising some tier 1 indicators, some tier 2 indicators, and some tier 3 indicators can be desgned for evaluating institutional discursive power.

The constructiveness is determined by their agenda-setting capability, as evidenced by the quantity, content, and purpose of their submitted proposals. State public enterprises also leverage research and negotiation advantages to influence rule formulation via scientific reports and formal declarations. Their influence is primarily evaluated by their ability to transform proposals into rules. Specific indicators, such as the quantity, content, and purpose of adopted proposals, serve to assess this potential influence. Their engagement performance, and resource investment as means to evaluate their influence. The weighting of evaluation indicators, crucial for the model's scientific rigour and fairness, can be determined using the Analytic Hierarchy Process (Brunelli, 2014). This process involved pairwise comparisons between indicators at the same tier. The Delphi method (Skulmoski et al., 2007) can be employed in conjunction, inviting experts from the relevant field. These combined approaches lead to the stepwise determination of indicator weights.

Prior to data analysis, this study employs qualitative judgement to score certain data, distinguishing importance within evaluation indicators. The range standardisation method is then applied to render data dimensionless, eliminating the impact of units and numerical ranges on comparability and interpretability. This process involves determining the maximum and minimum values of each indicator, calculating the range, and then normalising each observation value to fall between zero and one. This transformation ensures consistent directional effects for both positive and inverse indicators. The weighted sum method is utilised, multiplying standardised scores of third-tier indicators by their respective weights. The sum of these scores yields an overall score representing a member's institutional discursive power.

Conclusion

A rigorous framework and model for evaluating institutional discursive power within federal public enterprises are developed by the model using the principles of evaluation science. Evaluation dimensions are designated as tier 1 indicators, evaluation elements as tier 2 indicators, and particular parts of these evaluation elements as tier 3 indicators. The weights given to each of these indicators are established using the Analytic Hierarchy Process.

It is significant that this model provides a thorough and rigorously scientific method for evaluating and comparing the institutional discursive power of member states. It was created by combining subjective and objective assessments and harmonising qualitative and quantitative evaluations. Additionally, this model has some universality, which means that it may be used for study in and support ongoing research within intergovernmental institutions as well. The model provides stakeholders with insights derived from strong international practices and provides a more intuitive understanding of the role that each member state plays in supporting the establishment of intergovernmental institutions.

Acknowledgements

The authors are thankful to E. Horesh and three anonymous referees for helpful suggestions and to J. Patwardhan for excellent research assistance.

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