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Q2(c)

## **'Credo of Relevance' in post-behaviouralism advocates the importance of action science. Analyze**

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · PSIR GS 1 · 15 marks · Political Theory

Political Theory: meaning and approaches.

### **Core demand of the question**

- 'Credo of Relevance' in post-behaviouralism advocates the importance of **action science**. Analyze. (15 marks)

### **Revision summary**

Post-behaviouralism is Easton's 1969 turn from technique-first behaviouralism to a science of public problems.

The Credo of Relevance puts substance before technique and accepts professional responsibility for the use of knowledge.

**Action science** means inquiry organised to change problems, joining data to explicit values.

The turn corrects value-neutrality as evasion; it fails if it drops method for slogans.

Indian policy and rights research is **action science** when it evaluates institutions, not only when it reports attitudes.

### **Introduction**

Post-behaviouralism is **David Easton's** 1969 correction of the behavioural revolution. The Credo of Relevance says that political science must speak to the urgent problems of the time and must become an applied, problem-solving science of action, not only a value-neutral catalogue of regularities.

### **Body**

#### **From behaviouralism to the credo**

- Behaviouralism, which Easton had promoted, sought observable attitudes, systems of demand and support, and cumulative theory.
- **Robert Dahl's** decision studies and Almond and Verba's civic culture were products of that programme.
- By 1969, war, racial conflict, and urban crisis in the United States made a purely technical science look evasive.
- **Easton's American Political Science Association address stated a credo:** substance must precede technique; the needs of the day must set the agenda; science should not hide behind facts when the facts are of suffering.
- Relevance meant that the profession accepts responsibility for the use of knowledge.

### **Action science**

- **Action science**, in this setting, is inquiry organised to change a public problem, not only to describe it.
- **It joins empirical tools to explicit values:** peace, racial equality, poverty, and later environment and gender.
- The analyst is not a spectator. She designs institutions, evaluates policy, and accepts that intervention is part of the knowledge process.
- This is closer to **Marx's** thesis on changing the world, and to policy analysis, than to a laboratory model of detached observation.
- **Foucault** would later warn that sciences of action also govern; Easton's credo still assumed that relevant science could serve human ends.

### Analysis of the advocacy

- The credo correctly ended the pretence that **Easton's** own systems theory had no value premises.
- It risked turning the discipline into short-term advocacy without the very methods that make action competent.
- A balanced post-behaviouralism therefore keeps measurement and comparison, and then asks, with **Rawls**, which action is just, and with **Mill**, which action leaves liberty standing.
- Indian political science that studies implementation of Parts III and IV, panchayats, and welfare statutes is **action science** in Easton's sense when it evaluates and proposes, not only when it counts votes.
- The credo does not abolish theory. It forbids a theory that will not meet the world in which allocation, in Easton's own definition, already happens.

### Flow diagram

Behavioural science -> Easton 1969  
 Easton 1969 -> Credo of Relevance  
 Credo of Relevance -> Action science  
 Action science -> Problem-solving  
 Action science -> Explicit values

### Conclusion

- **The Credo of Relevance made post-behavioural political science an action science:** empirically informed, value-explicit, and responsible for public problems. Easton corrected his own **behavioural programme**. The analysis holds if action remains disciplined by method and by a public theory of justice, not if relevance becomes only a slogan.

### Facts & figures

#### Easton, 1969

APSA presidential address that launched the post-behavioural revolution and the Credo of Relevance.

#### Behavioural programme

Observable behaviour, operational concepts, and systems of demand, support, and output.

**Action science**

Inquiry whose test includes improvement of a public problem, not only prediction of regularities.

**Easton's definition of politics**

Authoritative allocation of values; post-behaviouralism asks allocation for whom and with what responsibility.

**Dahl**

Who Governs? remains a behavioural classic that post-behaviouralism did not discard, but relocated toward relevance.

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