

# Application Strategies of Fromm's Expectancy Theory in Secondary School Teaching

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**Abstract:** This study aims to explore the application strategies of Fromm's expectancy theory in secondary school teaching. By analyzing the basic connotations of expectancy theory and its applicability in the field of education, a series of specific strategies are proposed to stimulate students' learning motivation and enhance their self-directed learning abilities. Expectancy theory emphasizes that individual behavior is influenced by both expected outcomes and the likelihood of their achievement, providing a new perspective and theoretical basis for secondary school teaching reform.

**Keywords:** Fromm's Expectancy Theory; Secondary School Teaching; Strategy Research

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## 1. Basic Connotations of Fromm's Expectancy Theory

Fromm's expectation theory, also known as "valence - means - expectation theory", is a motivational theory proposed by Victor H. Fromm, a famous North American psychologist and behavioral scientist, in his book *Work and Motivation* in 1964<sup>[1]</sup>. The basic connotation of the theory can be elaborated from the following aspects:

### 1.1. Expectancy Formula

The core of Fromm's Expectancy Theory is the expectancy formula, where the motivational force (M) of an activity for a person depends on the total expected value (V) of the outcomes they can receive multiplied by their perceived probability (E) of achieving those outcomes. In formula terms:  $M = V * E$

Motivational Force (M): The internal drive that directly propels or induces individuals to take action, stimulating their internal potential and enthusiasm.

Goal Valence (V): Reflects the importance an individual places on the satisfaction of personal needs after achieving a goal. This psychological concept varies among individuals based on their different environments and needs.

Expectancy (E): Subjective judgment based on past experiences regarding the probability of achieving a goal and resulting in a certain outcome. It reflects the strength of an individual's confidence in achieving needs and motivations.

This formula demonstrates that the magnitude of motivational force is closely related to valence and expectancy; the higher the valence and expectancy, the greater the motivational force, and vice versa.

### 1.2. Expectancy Model

To maximize the stimulation of individuals' motivation, Fromm proposed an expectancy model: Effort → Performance (Achievement) → Organizational Rewards (Compensation) → Personal Needs<sup>[2]</sup>.

The relationship between these four factors in the expectancy model needs to consider three aspects:

Relationship between Effort and Performance: Individuals always hope to achieve expected goals through certain efforts. If individuals subjectively believe in a high probability of achieving expected goals through effort, they will be confident and stimulated to work with great vigor. However, this is also influenced by employees' abilities and support from superiors.

Relationship between Performance and Rewards: Individuals always hope to receive rewards after achieving results, including both material and spiritual rewards. If they believe that they can receive reasonable rewards after achieving performance, they may generate en-

thusiasm for work, otherwise, they may lack motivation.

Relationship between Rewards and Meeting Personal Needs: Individuals always hope that the rewards they obtain can meet some of their needs. However, because of differences in people's needs in various aspects, the content and extent of their needs may vary. Therefore, for different individuals, using the same reward can meet different needs, and can stimulate different work motivations.

### **1.3. Theoretical Premises**

Fromm's expectancy theory is based on the following two premises:

People will decide subjectively on the value of the results they expect from various actions. Therefore, everyone has different preferences for the expected results.

Any explanation of behavior motivation must consider not only the goals people want to achieve, but also the actions people take to achieve their preferred results.

## **2. Problems in Applying Fromm's Expectancy Theory in Secondary Education**

When applying Fromm's expectancy theory in secondary education, a series of problems may arise<sup>[3]</sup>. These problems mainly stem from the limitations of the theory itself and the specific characteristics of secondary school education. The following is a detailed analysis of these issues:

### **2.1. Insufficient Depth of Theoretical Understanding**

When applying Fromm's expectancy theory, secondary school teachers may not have a deep enough understanding of the theory due to their professional backgrounds and time constraints. They may find it difficult to fully grasp the essence of the theory and practical application methods. This may lead to teachers being unable to accurately apply the core concepts of the theory, such as valence, expectancy, and motivational force, when implementing it.

### **2.2. Unrealistic Goal Setting**

Setting goals is crucial when applying expectancy theory. However, secondary school teachers may face the problem of setting unrealistic goals in actual teaching. They may set goals that are too high or too low, which do not align with students' actual abilities and needs, or goals that lack specificity and measurability, making it difficult for students to clarify their efforts and effectively assess their progress.

### **2.3. Improper Management of Expectancy**

Proper management of expectancy is equally important when applying expectancy theory. Secondary school teachers may improperly manage students' expectations, such as setting expectations that are too high or too low, or failing to adjust them according to students' actual situations in a timely manner. This may negatively affect students' learning motivation, as excessively high expectations may make students feel too pressured, while too low expectations may lead to a lack of challenge and motivation.

### **2.4. Single and Non-specific Incentive Measures**

Incentive measures are important means of stimulating students' learning motivation. However, secondary school teachers may face the problem of implementing single and non-specific incentive measures. They may overly rely on traditional material rewards or verbal praise, neglecting students' diverse needs and characteristics. This may result in incentive measures that are ineffective in stimulating students' learning motivation and enthusiasm.

### **2.5. Disconnection between Theory and Practice**

Despite its theoretical scientific and practical potential, secondary school teachers may face the problem of a disconnect between theory and practice. They may focus too much on imparting theoretical knowledge and neglect students' actual needs and practical operations. This results in poor application of the theory in actual teaching and its inability to fully exert its due role.

### **3. Application Strategies of Fromm's Expectancy Theory in Secondary Education**

The application of Fromm's expectancy theory in motivation in secondary education is considered an important and effective strategy aimed at stimulating students' learning motivation, improving teachers' teaching enthusiasm, and promoting overall educational quality improvement. The following are specific application methods of this theory in secondary education:

#### **3.1. Scientific Goal Setting to Stimulate Learning Motivation**

According to expectancy theory, goal setting should be challenging and achievable. Secondary school teachers should help students set specific and measurable learning goals based on their actual situations, and guide them to recognize the possibility of achieving these goals, thereby enhancing their confidence and expectation. Through scientifically set learning goals, students' learning motivation and potential can be effectively stimulated.

#### **3.2. Enhancing Perception of Valence to Increase Learning Value**

Valence is the individual's assessment of the value of behavioral outcomes. Teachers should enhance students' awareness of the value of learning through various means. For example, by demonstrating the practical application and long-term impact of learning content, students can realize the importance of learning; through diverse classroom activities and practical projects, students can experience the joy and sense of accomplishment of learning; through timely feedback and reward mechanisms, students can feel the value and results of their efforts.

#### **3.3. Increasing Expectancy to Enhance Learning Confidence**

Expectancy is the individual's judgment of the likelihood of achieving behavioral outcomes. Secondary school teachers should adopt various methods to increase students' expectancy. First, teachers should provide necessary support and guidance to help students overcome difficulties and challenges in learning; second, teachers should give students positive expectations and encouragement to make them believe in their ability to achieve goals; finally, by demonstrating successful cases and positive role models, students' confidence and learning motivation can be stimulated.

#### **3.4. Optimizing Learning Environment to Promote Self-directed Learning**

Self-directed learning is one of the important goals of secondary education. According to expectancy theory, an optimized learning environment helps to enhance students' self-directed learning abilities and learning effectiveness. Teachers should strive to create a positive, open, and supportive learning atmosphere, encourage students to actively participate in the learning process, explore new areas, and solve practical problems. At the same time, provide diverse learning resources and tools to meet students' individualized needs and learning styles.

#### **3.5. Improving Evaluation System to Strengthen Incentive Effects**

The evaluation system is a key component of incentive strategies. Secondary school teachers should establish a sound evaluation system to ensure fairness, accuracy, and timeliness of evaluation. Evaluation content should cover multiple aspects such as students' learning achievements, attitudes, and innovation capabilities; evaluation methods should combine quantitative and qualitative approaches; evaluation results should be timely feedback to students and parents, helping them understand their learning progress and improvement space. At the same time, based on evaluation results, appropriate incentives should be given to stimulate students' learning motivation and enthusiasm.

### **Conclusion**

Fromm's expectation theory provides a new perspective and theoretical basis for middle school teaching reform. Through the application of strategies such as scientifically setting goals, enhancing titer perception, raising expectation, optimizing learning environment and improving evaluation system, students' learning motivation and autonomous learning ability can be effectively stimulated, thus improving teaching quality and students' learning effect. In the future research, we should further explore the application strategy of expectation theory in middle school teaching, so as to promote the cultivation of high-quality talents with innovative spirit and practical ability.

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