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RESEARCH PROFICIENCY THEORY FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS



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INTRODUCTION

Developing a theory on research proficiency for beginning teachers is both urgent and necessary, as it provides a framework for understanding the personal, interpersonal, institutional, and contextual factors influencing teacher research productivity. While numerous educational theories exist, most focus on learners rather than on how teachers develop research skills. A review of major theorists reveals significant gaps in explaining how teachers build research capacity, justifying the creation of the Research Proficiency Theory for Beginning Teachers (RPTBT), a utility theory that explains how beginning teachers move from competence to productivity and embed research as a lifelong professional pathway.

Most classical and contemporary theories emphasize child learning rather than teacher research proficiency. Learning, behaviorist, constructivist, psychodynamic, and ecological theories explain how learners acquire knowledge and skills but do not account for organizational support, mentoring, workload management, or systemic barriers that influence teachers' engagement in research. Likewise, research is not framed as a core professional anchor for teachers but remains peripheral or optional in existing models.

Existing theories also reveal key limitations, including overemphasis on external factors, insufficient attention to individual differences, and weak contextualization to specific cultural and educational settings. The Resource-Based View highlights the importance of tangible and intangible resources but does not explain how limited resources are transformed into sustained research productivity, particularly in low-resource, high-demand contexts such as public schools in the Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

Empirical studies in the Philippine context reveal a persistent gap between research competence and actual research productivity among teachers. Despite possessing baseline research knowledge, many teachers struggle to produce research outputs due to heavy teaching loads, limited resources, lack of mentorship, and insufficient institutional support. Beginning teachers and pre-service teachers face particular difficulties in conducting action research, writing for publication, and sustaining research engagement, underscoring the need for a guiding theoretical framework.

The Research Proficiency Theory for Beginning Teachers (RPTBT) addresses these gaps by integrating five interrelated constructs: personal factors, mentoring and guidance, intrapersonal and interpersonal capacities, organizational and institutional support, and extra-personal factors. Unlike learner-centered theories, RPTBT is teacher-centered and situates research development within the lived realities of beginning teachers, contextualized to national standards such as the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST).

By synthesizing gaps in existing theories and empirical findings, RPTBT provides both a scholarly and practical contribution. It strengthens the PPST by embedding research proficiency as a lived competency from the beginning of the teaching career, transforming research from a supplementary requirement into a core professional function. In doing so, the theory equips beginning teachers to become reflective, research-oriented professionals capable of improving instruction, contributing to educational innovation, and supporting long-term national development goals.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study is to develop a research proficiency theory for beginning teachers that can serve as a tool in research, informing strategies to enhance research proficiency and support the development of beginning teacher-cum- researchers.

THEORETICAL BASIS

This study is anchored on the axiomatic-deductive approach, a systematic method of theory development that begins with foundational axioms from which all propositions are logically derived, ensuring internal consistency, clarity, and rigor (Omoseebi et al., 2025). Three axioms form the basis of the Research Proficiency Theory for Beginning Teachers (RPBT): (1) effective teaching and learning rests upon evidence derived from research, (2) research proficiency among beginning teachers is influenced by various personal, professional, and contextual factors, and (3) beginning teachers demonstrate varying levels of research proficiency depending on prior training, exposure, and institutional support.

From these axioms, two main propositions are deduced. Proposition 1 states that beginning teachers utilize action research to enhance instructional practices, foster professional growth, and develop reflective teaching habits. Proposition 2 posits that research proficiency among beginning teachers is shaped by a combination of personal factors (academic training, prior research exposure, personal valuing), mentoring and guidance, intrapersonal and interpersonal characteristics, extra-personal supports, and organizational or institutional influences.

The theoretical basis emphasizes that research is a crucial driver of teacher development, allowing educators to implement evidence-based practices, address classroom challenges, and contribute to school improvement. It recognizes the dynamic interaction between individual motivation, training, mentoring, institutional culture, and systemic factors in shaping research engagement.

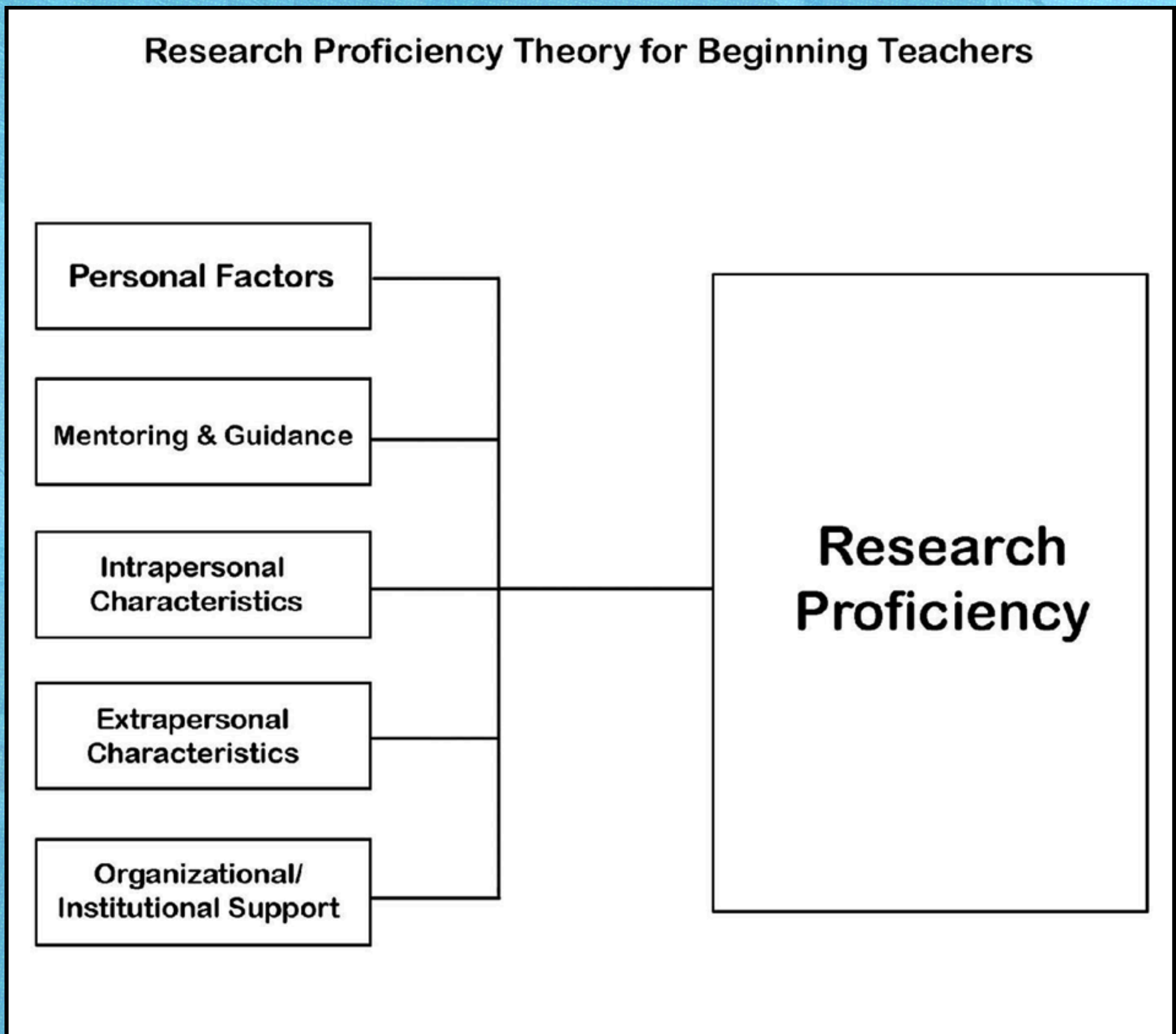
By integrating these elements, the axiomatic-deductive approach provides a logically coherent and generalizable framework to explain how beginning teachers develop, sustain, and apply research proficiency. It highlights the importance of action research as both a professional tool and a mechanism for continuous instructional improvement, aligning with national education priorities and reforms.

Ultimately, this theoretical foundation situates research proficiency as a core competency for beginning teachers, offering a structured model to guide teacher preparation, mentoring, and professional development while addressing systemic challenges in the Philippine educational context.

Below is the matrix which shows the summary of axioms, propositions and theory development.

AXIOM	PROPOSITION
Axiom 1: Effective teaching and learning rests upon the evidence derived from research.	Proposition 1 suggests that beginning teachers utilize action research to improve instructional practices in the classroom.
Axiom 2: Research proficiency among beginning teachers is influenced by various factors.	
Axiom 3: Beginning teachers have varying levels of research proficiency.	Proposition 2: Research Proficiency among beginning teachers is influenced by personal factors (academic training, prior research exposure, personal valuing; mentoring and guidance, extra-personal factors, intra-personal/interpersonal and organizational factors.

RESEARCH PROFICIENCY THEORY FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS



This theory explains how research proficiency among beginning teachers is practiced in instructional activities and varies according to multiple interconnected factors. It emphasizes that research proficiency is not just an individual skill but a professional journey supported by personal effort, mentoring, and school systems. Research proficiency is defined as the ability to conduct, apply, and disseminate research to improve instructional practices and student outcomes.

RESEARCH PROFICIENCY THEORY FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS

The theory is grounded in two propositions: first, the use of action research improves teaching practices and fosters reflective practice, critical thinking, and problem-solving; second, research proficiency is influenced by multiple factors, including academic training, prior research exposure, personal valuing, mentoring and guidance, intra- and extra-personal characteristics, and organizational support.

The key influencing factors, which are interrelated and collectively shape research proficiency, include:

- **Personal Factors** (such as academic training, prior research experiences, personal valuing, and interest)
- **Mentoring and Guidance** (support from experienced researchers to develop research skills)
- **Intrapersonal Characteristics** (motivation, self-efficacy, critical thinking)
- **Extrapersonal Characteristics** (collaboration, communication, networking skills)
- **Organizational/Institutional Support** (school culture, administrative support, resource availability)

These five interconnected constructs demonstrate that research proficiency among beginning teachers is a multifaceted construct shaped by personal, professional, and organizational influences, highlighting the complex and dynamic nature of developing research skills in novice educators.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Develop research-based training programs:** Design training programs that incorporate research-based practices, enabling teachers to design and implement effective instructional strategies.
2. **Emphasize academic training:** Ensure that teacher training programs provide a strong foundation in research methods and design.
3. **Prior research exposure:** Provide opportunities for teachers to engage in research projects and activities to develop their research skills
4. **Personal valuing:** Foster a culture that values research and its application in teaching practices.
5. **Addressing other factors:** Consider the impact of personal interest, motivation, interpersonal, intra-personal, and organizational factors on research proficiency.

