Profound Implications of Aristotelianism and Structural Functionalism in Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program under Revised K to 12 Curriculum in Contemporary Governance

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ABSTRACT

This systematic review investigates the profound implications of Aristotelianism and Structural Functionalism in the governance and administration of education policies and programs under the Revised K to 12 Curriculum, particularly focusing on the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) program. It synthesizes contemporary literature to explore how Aristotelianism emphasizes moral character, virtue, and participatory citizenship as vital values guiding decision-making processes in educational governance. From an Aristotelian perspective, effective educational leadership arises from cultivating ethical dispositions that prioritize the common good, justice, and collective well-being.

Meanwhile, structural functionalism highlights the significance of interdependent roles, organizational efficiency, and social stability within educational systems. It also emphasizes how governance structures, institutional policies, and administrative mechanisms contribute to maintaining equilibrium and ensuring the effective delivery of educational programs. Within the ARAL framework, this theoretical perspective explains how collaboration among administrators, teachers, and stakeholders strengthens system functionality and responsiveness to students' learning needs.

The review features the complementary nature of these theoretical frameworks in influencing both the ethical and operational aspects of educational governance. Empirical findings show that when moral leadership and functional efficiency converge, educational reforms become more sustainable, inclusive, and aligned with national learning goals. At the right time, the integration of Aristotelian and Structural-Functionalist perspectives provides a strong theoretical foundation for advancing governance practices that promote academic recovery, equitable access, and holistic student development under the evolving K to 12 frameworks.

Keywords: Aristotelianism, Structural-Functionalism, Educational Governance, Educational Administration, Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL), K to 12 Curriculum, Educational Policy, Moral Education, Program Implementation, Educational Reform

INTRODUCTION

In the Philippine context, the Department of Education (DepEd) functions as the central authority responsible for developing and implementing policies, plans, and programs across the basic education spectrum. This role necessitates effective education governance to ensure that reforms such as the Revised K to 12 Curriculum and the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program effectively promote equity, quality, and access. Education governance in this setting involves a complex network of individuals, institutions, and policy instruments working collaboratively to foster an interconnected and responsive school system.

Historically, the integration of Aristotelian and structural functionalist theories into Philippine education governance can be traced back to early post-colonial reforms, where moral education was emphasized alongside structural organization influenced by American educational models. For instance, character formation programs grounded in virtue ethics found resonance during the 1950s to 1970s, emphasizing civic responsibility amid nation-building efforts. Concurrently, structural approaches were adopted to streamline administrative functions and coordinate regional educational governance, reflecting a blend of ethical and functional priorities in policy design.

According to Wilkins (2018), governance in education encompasses the activities and relationships that enable the system to function effectively and respond to societal needs. To understand the foundational theories underlying effective governance, two significant perspectives are investigated. Aristotelianism highlights the moral and civic purposes of education, advocating for the development of character, practical wisdom, and active citizenship as essential virtues for democratic participation. Conversely, as stated by Nickerson (2024), structural functionalism offers a macro-structural view, emphasizing how different components of the education system such as school boards, officials, and government agencies perform specific roles that sustain the stability, efficiency, and adaptability of the system.

Moreover, these theories inform governance practices that seek to balance moral-civic development with systemic stability and efficiency. The Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program exemplifies this synthesis by embedding moral and civic educational goals within a system designed for operational effectiveness, accountability, and responsiveness to learners' needs (DepEd, 2024). Empirical research accentuates the growing theoretical and practical relevance of these frameworks, Aristotelian principles shaped character and citizenship education, and Structural Functionalist insights guiding organizational and systemic reforms aimed at stability and effectiveness.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK SELECTION

The review integrates Aristotelianism, a philosophical framework advanced by Aristotle which positions education as a crucial vehicle for moral development, civic responsibility, and the nurturing of virtuous citizens essential for democratic governance.

While Aristotelianism offers a compelling normative focus on moral and civic development, its idealistic nature may pose challenges in addressing pragmatic governance issues and diverse learner contexts. Moreover, Structural Functionalism's inclination towards maintaining systemic equilibrium sometimes risks overlooking inherent inequalities and innovation barriers within educational systems. To counterbalance these limitations, incorporating complementary frameworks such as transformational leadership which emphasizes inspirational motivation and change management and ethical leadership, which foregrounds principled decision-making, could enrich the moral and administrative dimensions of governance.

Recent studies conducted by Ijaz et al. (2025) and Lu (2024) continue to emphasize Aristotle's moral philosophy as foundational, asserting that education's primary aim is the cultivation of practical wisdom and character through dispositions aligned with reason and virtue, ultimately fostering human flourishing. Aristotle's educational paradigm advocates for individualized instruction, active engagement, and a seamless integration of theory and practice, all of which are crucial for nurturing practical wisdom and the development of virtuous character. This paradigm aligns closely with the Philippine Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program, which emphasizes holistic student development, particularly the cultivation of resilience and responsibility.

In contrast, structural functionalism, a sociological theory proposed by Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) and further developed by Talcott Parsons (1902–1979) and Robert K. Merton (1910–2003), conceptualizes education governance as an interconnected system where multiple components—such as school boards, superintendents, and government agencies—perform distinct functional roles to ensure coordination, accountability, and operational effectiveness. This theory views education as a vital mechanism for socialization, role allocation, and the promotion of social cohesion. It highlights how governance structures contribute to system stability and adaptive functionality by organizing roles and maintaining social order (Supriadi, 2021). Through addressing

both the moral-civic aims of education and the organizational necessities of system functioning, these frameworks collectively provide a strong, multidimensional perspective that informs the design and execution of education policy.

ARAL Program Under the Revised K-12 Curriculum

The Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program, mandated under Republic Act No. 12028, represents the Philippine Department of Education's comprehensive national initiative to address significant learning gaps and long-standing challenges in foundational education (Bajo, 2025).

Comparatively, similar educational recovery programs in Southeast Asia, such as Indonesia's Program Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter and Malaysia's Program Pemulihan Akademik, emphasize holistic learner development and equity. These programs also integrate socio-emotional learning and community involvement, reflecting regional trends toward inclusive education governance. These parallels offer valuable insights into program design and implementation challenges, providing a regional perspective that bolsters the contextual understanding of the ARAL initiative.

Starting in the School Year 2025–2026 alongside the revised K to 12 curriculum, ARAL targets struggling learners from Grades 1 to 10 by providing focused tutorial interventions in reading, mathematics, and science, with ARAL-Reading launching initially for Grades 1 to 10 and emphasizing support for low, high-emerging, and frustrated readers (Malipot, 2025). The program aims to strengthen foundational skills, improve literacy and numeracy, and accelerate the academic recovery of learners to meet national educational standards.

To operationalize this initiative, DepEd has instituted extensive capacity-building efforts for tutors comprising teachers, para-teachers, pre-service teachers, and other qualified personnel ensuring they are equipped in creating tailored, needs-based remediation strategies and assessments. Nationwide tutor training, the distribution of learning resources, and the ARAL School Readiness and Responsiveness Audit (ASRRA) are critical components to guarantee quality and readiness in program delivery. The program promotes social and emotional learning integration, fostering socio-emotional development in learners aged 7 to 16, recognizing the interrelation of academic and non-academic dimensions in recovery.

According to Malipot (2025), parental involvement is also a vital aspect of ARAL, as parents receive orientation to support their children's learning at home, fostering a collaborative approach between schools and families. Community and stakeholder engagement are encouraged through local kickoff activities and advocacy sessions to build widespread support. By aligning with national education policies and literacy goals, ARAL serves as a strategic, multi-sectoral effort to bridge learning disparities, ensure inclusive quality education, and enhance Filipino learners' competencies for lifelong success.

Application of Theories in Governance and Administration and Its Implications

The application of Aristotelianism and Structural Functionalism in governance and administration offers a rich, dual-perspective framework for understanding how education systems function both ethically and operationally. Aristotelianism informs governance by positioning education as a deliberate and ethically grounded endeavor aimed at nurturing civic virtues, moral character, and participatory citizenship. These elements are foundational for democratic legitimacy and active engagement within governance structures, emphasizing the development of practical wisdom (phronesis) as a guiding principle for ethical decision-making and leadership. Governance informed by Aristotelian philosophy prioritizes creating inclusive and equitable learning spaces where students not only achieve academically but also develop resilience, responsibility, and a sense of civic duty. This ethical emphasis aligns closely with programs such as the Philippine Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) initiative, which integrates policies fostering academic achievement alongside the cultivation of moral and civic competencies, thereby preparing learners to participate effectively as citizens in democratic societies (Department of Education, 2024; Ijaz et al., 2025; Lu, 2024).

On the other hand, structural Functionalism provides a sociological lens that explicates the organizational and system-level dynamics of governance and administration. This framework clarifies the interconnected and interdependent roles played by multiple stakeholders including policymakers, school leaders, educators, and

community members in ensuring cohesive educational program delivery and responsiveness to community needs. Structural Functionalism underscores the importance of effective operational processes, such as resource allocation, policy implementation, and accountability mechanisms, which serve to uphold system stability, social cohesion, and continuous improvement. It highlights that the education system is a complex structure wherein each component fulfills specific functions that contribute to the system's overall health, effectiveness, and adaptability in the face of changing educational demands (Smith, 2024; Taylor, Taylor-Neu, & Butterwick, 2024).

In addition, Aristotelianism in education governance emphasizes the moral and ethical development of leaders and learners alike. Grounded in Aristotle's philosophy, it views education as a means to cultivate virtue, practical wisdom, and active citizenship. This perspective calls for leadership that makes decisions based on justice and the common good, prioritizing holistic learner development and moral responsibility. Within the ARAL Program, this translates into policies that foster character formation alongside academic recovery, aligning educational goals with democratic values and human flourishing.

Meanwhile, structural functionalism, on the other hand, offers a view of education governance as a coordinated system of interdependent roles working together to maintain social stability, accountability, and effective program delivery. Developed by Durkheim and furthered by Parsons and Merton, this theory highlights the importance of collaboration among administrators, teachers, parents, and stakeholders to ensure that educational initiatives are responsive, efficient, and equitable. In the context of the ARAL Program, Structural Functionalism explains how well-organized governance structures support the smooth and effective implementation of learning recovery efforts.

Combining these theories complement one another by balancing normative ethical imperatives with practical organizational considerations. Aristotelianism grounds governance in moral purpose and civic engagement, while Structural Functionalism ensures education systems function smoothly through well-defined roles, responsibilities, and systemic coordination. This integrated approach informs educational governance and administration in ways that promote both equitable student development and sustainable institutional performance.

EFFECTIVENESS AND EVIDENCE FROM RECENT RESEARCH

Empirical studies have long affirmed the influence of Aristotelian principles in shaping education policies that holistically integrate moral, intellectual, and social dimensions, thereby yielding heightened student engagement and improved learning outcomes (DepEd, 2024). Specifically, Aristotle's emphasis on active, personalized, and inquiry-driven learning underpins many of the pedagogical reforms embedded in the ARAL Program (Growth Engineering, 2024). In this regard, the ARAL initiative reflects the fusion of ethical development with cognitive and affective learning through learner- centered strategies.

Meanwhile, Structural Functionalism provides a complementary analytical framework for evaluating governance infrastructures and their ability to coordinate resources and actors efficiently within multi-layered education systems (School Governance Literature Review, 2025). Empirical evidence further shows that education programs modelled on structural-functionalist principles demonstrate higher organizational efficiency and accountability, thereby supporting sustained educational recovery and improved access to learning opportunities (Supriadi, 2021; ChalkyPapers, 2023).

Moreover, Structural Functionalism, explored extensively by Asuncion Edelyn B. Asuncion, continues to serve as a vital sociological framework explaining education's role in fostering social integration and maintaining systemic equilibrium (Asuncion, 2025). Correspondingly, this theoretical view aligns with the ARAL Program's function of preserving social order through structured educational recovery. In support of this, the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) has institutionalized the ARAL Program through official policy releases, including the 2025 DepEd Memorandum and program announcements that emphasize learning recovery in basic subjects and promote inclusive education governance (DepEd, 2025).

Likewise, the Quality Basic Education Development Plan authored by the DepEd Planning and Development Office situates ARAL within the broader national reform agenda that envisions systemic improvements in access, quality, and governance over the next decade (DepEd Planning Office, 2025). Complementing this structural vision, educational scholars such as Matthew O. Miller (2023) advance the neo-Aristotelian perspective, emphasizing practical wisdom and moral development as critical complements to cognitive learning—concepts that enrich the learner-centred goals of the ARAL framework.

In addition, governance scholars like J. P. Smith (2025) contribute insights into school-based management reforms that enhance educational outcomes and strengthen ARAL's localized implementation. Finally, foundational theoretical resources such as Brian Legget's exposition on Structural Functionalism in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy offer essential background for understanding education's structural purpose and its functional role in sustaining the broader social system (Legget, 2004).

Taken together, these authors and institutional documents present a coherent and contemporary foundation that integrates Aristotelian moral and intellectual education with Structural-Functionalist social theory and pragmatic governance approaches an integration central to the ARAL Program and the continuing reforms within the Revised K to 12 Curriculum of Philippine education.

Synthesis of Theory Alignment with Practical Outcomes

Aristotelianism and structural functionalism offer a comprehensive dual vantage point that significantly enriches the understanding of education governance and administration. Aristotelianism provides the normative and ethical foundation for governance by articulating the moral, civic, and democratic purposes that should underpin educational objectives. Grounded in the cultivation of virtues such as practical wisdom, justice, and active citizenship, this perspective emphasizes that governance aims not only to manage systems but to nurture responsible individuals capable of contributing meaningfully to the democratic fabric of society. It foregrounds education as a deliberate project where policy decisions are ethically informed and oriented toward the holistic development of learners as virtuous citizens (Wilkins & Olmedo, 2018; Ijaz et al., 2025; Lu, 2024).

Conversely, structural functionalism complements this normative framework by elucidating the functional and operational mechanisms necessary to realize these ethical and civic aims effectively within complex educational systems. It describes how governance structures comprising policymakers, administrators, school leaders, teachers, and community actors are interrelated components fulfilling specific roles that ensure coordination, accountability, and responsiveness. This framework highlights how programmatic coherence, resource allocation, stakeholder collaboration, and systematic monitoring uphold the stability, adaptability, and continuing effectiveness of education governance. It affirms that the education system functions as an interdependent whole, where stability and change coexist through dynamic stakeholder engagement and clearly defined operational procedures (Smith, 2024).

This theoretical synergy is clearly observable in contemporary reforms such as the Philippine Revised K to 12 Curriculum and its associated governance frameworks. These reforms exemplify an integrated approach that simultaneously promotes democratic participation by fostering inclusive and equitable education and maintains system coherence by leveraging collaborative stakeholder engagement and rigorous programmatic accountability. The Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) program particularly embodies this integrated governance model: it aims to provide equitable access to quality education and to accelerate academic recovery through a coordinated governance architecture that engages teachers, parents, community members, and policymakers in a unified effort to address learning gaps and improve educational outcomes (Department of Education, 2024).

Thus, the integration of Aristotelian ethics and Structural Functionalist organizational insights provides education governance with a robust, multidimensional conceptual foundation. It fosters policymaking and administration that are simultaneously morally grounded, socially responsive, operationally sound, and strategically adaptive—qualities indispensable for advancing equitable, effective, and democratic education systems in today's dynamic contexts.

CONCLUSION ON THEORY EFFECTIVENESS

This systematic review substantiates that Aristotelianism and Structural Functionalism together provide profound theoretical insights and practical tools that profoundly enhance education governance and administration. Aristotelianism offers normative guidance by framing education governance as an ethically driven pursuit focused on nurturing civic virtues, practical wisdom, and participatory citizenship all essential for the legitimacy and vitality of democratic governance structures. This ethical foundation informs policy formulation to prioritize not only academic achievement but also moral and civic development, ensuring education serves as a transformative force for both individuals and society. Structural Functionalism complements this by elucidating the functional and operational mechanisms crucial for translating these normative goals into effective and stable educational systems. It clarifies how the interdependent roles of diverse governance stakeholders, policymakers, school leaders, community actors, and others maintain accountability, coordination, responsiveness, and systemic coherence in program delivery. This dual framework enables a holistic understanding of education governance that balances moral purpose with organizational efficiency and adaptability.

The governance and administration of the Philippine Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) program exemplify this complementary effectiveness of the two theories. The ARAL program incorporates the Aristotelian vision by fostering equitable access and holistic learner development while simultaneously applying Structural Functionalist principles in its coordinated, multi-stakeholder governance architecture to ensure programmatic accountability, operational efficiency, and responsiveness to learners' needs. This integration demonstrates the ongoing relevance and applicability of both theories in shaping contemporary education reform initiatives. Together, Aristotelianism and Structural Functionalism form a robust conceptual foundation that advances equity, democratic participation, and educational quality within Philippine educational governance and reform.

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