



Social Science Structure in Science Learning in Elementary Schools

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Article history: <i>Received:</i> 2026-02-06 <i>Revised:</i> 2026-04-20 <i>Accepted:</i> 2026-05-01</p> <p>Keywords: <i>social science structure; science learning; elementary school</i></p> <p>This is an open access article under the CC BY-SA license. Copyright © 2026 by Author. Published by Yayasan Mujtahidin Sajimah Selong (Musa Foundation), Indonesia.</p>	<p>Learning Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS) in elementary schools requires a structured conceptual understanding so that students can meaningfully understand social phenomena. One important foundation in learning IPAS is the structure of social sciences that includes facts, concepts, generalizations, and theories as a unified system of knowledge. This study aims to describe the structure of social science learning in IPAS in elementary schools and to analyze the role of facts, concepts, generalizations, and theories in building students' social understanding. This study uses a qualitative approach, employing a literature review of journal articles, academic books, and educational policy documents relevant to learning IPAS and social sciences. The results of the study indicate that the structure of the social sciences serves as a conceptual framework that gradually organizes learning IPAS from concrete experiences to abstract understanding. Facts serve as the initial foundation for recognizing social reality; concepts organize facts to make them meaningful; generalizations help identify social patterns; and theories unite all these elements into a coherent explanatory framework. Thus, understanding the structure of social sciences is an important basis in designing learning IPAS in elementary schools that is oriented towards the development of social reasoning and meaning in community life.</p>

INTRODUCTION

The structure of social studies is a conceptual framework that helps explain how knowledge about society is systematically and scientifically organized, making it an important component of learning the Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS) in elementary schools. As a subject that integrates various aspects of social sciences such as sociology, anthropology, history, and economics, IPAS is designed to facilitate students' understanding of social phenomena in everyday life through interrelated facts, concepts, generalizations, and theories. Literature reviews show that social studies learning in elementary schools serves not only as a mere transfer of knowledge but also as a tool for shaping positive social attitudes, critical thinking skills, and awareness of social relationships in students' surroundings (Marhamah et al., 2025). The structure of social studies is not only a theoretical framework, but also a pedagogical tool that supports students' conceptual understanding in the real context of social life.

Previous research on social studies learning in elementary school contexts has highlighted the importance of philosophical, sociological, pedagogical, and psychological

foundations in designing effective curricula and learning methods (Herman et al., 2024). Marhamah's research found that sociological foundations of learning help connect subject matter to social dynamics, making learning more meaningful for elementary school students (Marhamah et al., 2025). From another perspective, literature indicates that developing a social studies learning structure is necessary to facilitate student engagement through a contextual and relevant approach, particularly by linking social facts and concepts to students' real-life experiences (Fauzi & Ayuni, 2024). These findings underscore the need for a more in-depth study of how social studies structures can be integrated holistically into science learning not only to broaden students' knowledge but also to strengthen their thinking skills and social character.

However, the existing literature remains limited in detail in its discussion of how the structural components of social studies, including facts, concepts, generalizations, and theories, play a systematic role in science learning at the elementary school level. Few studies explicitly outline the relationship between the structure of social studies and appropriate learning strategies for elementary school students, especially in the context of the Merdeka curriculum, which emphasizes contextual and reflective learning. For example, most previous research focuses on learning approaches such as Project-Based Learning or the implementation of social studies learning in general without examining the underlying theoretical structures, thus underdescribing the structural role of social studies in shaping students' scientific thinking processes (Saidah & Damariswara, 2024; Marhamah et al., 2025; Fauzi & Ayuni, 2024). This gap indicates the need for empirical and conceptual studies that link the structure of social studies to the practice of science learning in elementary schools.

To address this gap, this study was designed to comprehensively explain the structure of social sciences within the framework of science learning in elementary schools by outlining its internal components: facts, concepts, generalizations, and theories, and their respective roles in fostering student understanding. Thus, this study aims to: (1) describe the structure of social sciences in science learning; (2) explain facts, concepts, generalizations, and theories in the structure of social sciences; and (3) analyze the role of the structure of social sciences in improving the quality of science learning in elementary schools.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method to examine the structure of social sciences in elementary school science learning. This literature review method was chosen because it allows researchers to explore, review, and synthesize various relevant scientific sources to build a comprehensive conceptual understanding of facts, concepts, generalizations, and theories in the social sciences. This method is commonly used in educational research to formulate theoretical and pedagogical frameworks based on academically validated previous research findings. Through this approach, the analysis focuses on the meaning and interrelationships among



concepts, rather than on the quantitative measurement of variables, thus aligning with the character of conceptual studies in the sciences at the elementary school level.

The research data sources were national and international scientific journal articles, academic books, and educational policy documents relevant to science and social science learning, as well as to the structure of the social sciences. Journal articles were selected based on the following criteria: (1) discussing social studies/IPAS learning in elementary schools, (2) containing studies on the concepts, structures, or development of social science learning, and (3) published in nationally reputable journals or relevant scientific proceedings. Source selection was conducted to ensure that the analyzed data were academically valid and relevant to the context of elementary education, as recommended in educational research based on literature reviews.

Data collection techniques were conducted through a systematic literature search using keywords related to elementary school science learning, social science structures, and social studies education. The collected literature was then selected and classified based on the suitability of the theme, research objectives, and conceptual contributions. Data analysis was conducted through critical reading, comparison, and synthesis of the literature to identify patterns, relationships between concepts, and tendencies in experts' thinking regarding the structure of social sciences in learning. The results of this synthesis are then presented descriptively and analytically to demonstrate the position of the social sciences as the foundation of science learning in elementary schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social Science Structure in Science Learning

The structure of social science refers to the conceptual framework that explains how social knowledge is organized, developed, and applied to understand the realities of human life in society. In an educational context, this structure is not understood as a collection of separate pieces of information, but rather as a knowledge system composed of interconnected facts, concepts, generalizations, and theories organized hierarchically and functionally. Fraenkel (1980) emphasized that the structure of social science serves as a thinking tool that helps students organize social experiences into meaningful categories. Through this structure, social phenomena are not only observed descriptively but also analyzed in terms of broader patterns of relationships and meanings, thereby opening space for deeper understanding in science learning. (Komariah et al., 2023)

In elementary school science learning, the structure of social studies serves as the foundation for developing students' conceptual and critical thinking skills. Social science knowledge is presented in stages, starting with an introduction to social facts relevant to students' lives, then progressing to more abstract concepts and generalizations appropriate to their stage of cognitive development (Syafuruddin et al., 2024; Sari et al., 2025). Banks (2015) states that effective social studies learning must help students understand the structure of the social science discipline so they can connect personal

experiences with academic knowledge. In this way, the structure of social studies serves not only as a scientific framework but also as a pedagogical tool for building contextual understanding in science learning. Furthermore, the structure of the social sciences provides methodological guidance in science learning, particularly in selecting and compiling teaching materials aligned with the objectives of basic education. Sapriya (2017) explains that the structure of social sciences helps teachers determine the focus of learning, whether on the aspects of knowledge, attitudes, or social skills to be developed. By understanding this structure, teachers can develop learning that is not rote-based, but encourages students to understand the relationships between social phenomena. Therefore, a discussion of the structure of the social sciences provides an important foundation for understanding the role of facts, concepts, generalizations, and theories in science learning, which will be elaborated further in the following discussion.

Fakta, Konsep, Generalisasi, dan Teori Dalam Struktur Ilmu Sosial

Facts in the Structure of Social Sciences

Facts in social science are understood as empirical representations of social reality that can be observed and verified through direct experience and documented data. Facts serve as the foundation for building social knowledge because they provide a concrete picture of events, conditions, or social phenomena occurring in society (Pagano, 2025). In an educational context, facts are not meant to be memorized in isolation but rather serve as a starting point for students to recognize social phenomena contextually. Fraenkel (1980) explains that facts acquire scientific meaning when placed within a clear conceptual framework, thus not stopping at superficial descriptions (Van Der Walddt, 2020). Therefore, facts within the structure of social science always necessitate abstraction through concepts.

Concepts in the Structure of Social Sciences

Concepts are the result of an abstraction process from various facts that share certain characteristics or relationships, thus enabling the grouping of social phenomena into meaningful categories. Concepts help simplify the complexity of social reality by highlighting the essential characteristics that distinguish one phenomenon from another. In elementary school science learning, concepts play a crucial role because they serve as a bridge between students' concrete experiences and more general social understanding. Fraenkel (1980) emphasized that concepts are not physical objects, but rather mental constructs that enable students to systematically organize social experiences. The existence of these concepts then allows for the emergence of relationships between concepts in the form of generalizations.

Generalization in the Structure of Social Sciences

A generalization is a general statement built from the relationship between two or more concepts to describe patterns, tendencies, or regularities in social life. Generalizations not only unify various concepts but also help explain why a social phenomenon tends to occur repeatedly under certain conditions. In social studies



learning, generalizations play a role in encouraging students to think analytically by examining the cause-and-effect relationships between social phenomena, rather than simply recognizing facts in isolation. Sapriya (2017) explains that generalizations in social studies and natural sciences learning serve as the foundation for developing students' social reasoning. From these generalizations, more systematic explanations in the form of theories develop.

Theory in the Structure of Social Sciences

A theory is a logically interrelated set of generalizations that explain the relationships between facts and concepts in social life. Theory not only answers questions about what happens but also explains the reasons and mechanisms behind why a social phenomenon occurs in a certain way. Within the structure of social science, theory serves as a framework for thinking that integrates all elements of knowledge into a coherent whole. Fraenkel et al. (2012) state that theory helps educators and researchers understand, interpret, and guide analysis of social reality consistently. In elementary school science learning, theory is generally implicitly present through the structured preparation of learning materials and activities.

The Role of Facts, Concepts, Generalizations, and Theories in the Structure of Social Sciences in Science Learning

Facts serve as the starting point for science learning because they provide an empirical basis for students to recognize the social reality around them. In the elementary school context, social facts are generally derived from simple events close to students' lives, making them easy to observe and understand. Facts are not intended as memorized information, but rather as starting material for building broader understanding through scientific thinking processes. Fraenkel (1980) emphasized that facts gain meaning in learning when they are processed and connected to a more systematic knowledge structure, thus serving as a foundation for concept formation in science learning.

Concepts play a role in organizing various social facts into meaningful categories, enabling students to simplify the complexity of social reality. Through concepts, students begin to understand the general characteristics of various social phenomena and distinguish them from other similar phenomena. In science learning, concepts help students connect concrete experiences with more abstract and structured social understanding. Banks (2015) states that mastery of social concepts is an important prerequisite for developing a broader understanding of social relations, because concepts enable students to build connections between personal experiences and academic knowledge, which in turn opens up space for the formation of generalizations.

Generalization serves to broaden conceptual understanding by connecting several concepts to form patterns or trends in social life. Through generalization, students are encouraged to understand that social phenomena do not occur in isolation, but rather have certain regularities and cause-and-effect relationships. In elementary school science learning, generalization plays a role in training students' analytical and reflective thinking



skills, as they begin to see the relationships between social phenomena more broadly. Sapriya (2017) emphasizes that generalization is the core of social reasoning in social studies and science learning, as it helps students understand social dynamics in a more meaningful and focused manner.

Theory plays an integrative role in the structure of social sciences because it unites facts, concepts, and generalizations into a coherent explanatory framework. Theory helps explain why certain social patterns form and how social relations develop in society. In elementary school science learning, theory is generally not presented as an abstract formulation, but is presented implicitly through examples, narratives, and learning activities that reflect theoretical thinking (Putri et al., 2025). Fraenkel (1980) explains that theory functions as an interpretive framework that provides consistency in understanding social phenomena, so its presence in science learning becomes an important foundation for understanding the structure of social sciences as a whole.

CONCLUSION

The structure of social studies plays a fundamental role in elementary school science learning because it serves as a framework that organizes students' understanding of social phenomena in a systematic and meaningful way. Through this structure, science learning is not understood as a collection of isolated information, but rather as a system of knowledge that is structured gradually from concrete experiences to more abstract understanding. The presence of a social science structure helps bridge students' everyday social experiences with academic knowledge, so that science learning can develop a way of thinking that is directed, contextual, and in accordance with the characteristics of elementary school students' cognitive development.

Facts, concepts, generalizations, and theories play a complementary role in building the structure of social science in science learning. Facts serve as the initial foundation for recognizing social reality, concepts serve to organize facts to make them meaningful, generalizations help recognize social patterns and regularities, while theories unite all these elements in a coherent explanatory framework. Understanding the role of these elements provides a conceptual basis for teachers in designing science learning that is not oriented towards memorization, but rather towards developing social reasoning and meaning in community life, so that science learning in elementary schools can proceed in a more structured and meaningful manner.

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