

# Modernization of Pesantren Education According to Azyumardi Azra and Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi (A Comparative Study)

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## Abstract

The idea of modernization as an effort to adapt and maintain pesantren education amid the challenges of the times has become a dilemma for pesantren. The issue of modernizing pesantren education boils down to what kind of modernism is offered in the idea of pesantren modernization. Differences in modernism can be seen in the thoughts of Azyumardi Azra and Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi, which have implications for differences in the ideas of modernization of pesantren education in several aspects. The objectives of this study are: (1) To identify the idea of modernizing pesantren education in the thinking of Azyumardi Azra. (2) To identify the idea of modernizing pesantren education in the thinking of Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi. (3) To identify the differences between the ideas of modernization proposed by Azyumardi Azra and Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi. This research is a literature study that uses the works of Azyumardi Azra and Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi as primary sources. All writings that refer to these two figures are used as secondary sources. This study uses a philosophical and comparative approach to analyze and compare the thoughts of the two figures. The conclusions of this study show that: Modernism in Azyumardi Azra's thinking is understood as development and modernism in Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi's thinking is understood as renewal (Tajdid wa Islah). These differences in modernism have an impact on the differences in the ideas of modernization of pesantren education in terms of institutional aspects, management, curriculum, and methodology, although there are some similarities in the thoughts of both figures.

**Keywords:** *Modernization, Modernism, Idea, Pesantren Education*

## INTRODUCTION

The issue of Islamic boarding schools at the end of the first quarter of the 21st century has become a long-running controversy in Indonesian society. Public attention has increased after several cases such as immorality, feudalism, exploitation of santri, collapsed buildings, torture, and even murder occurred in Pesantren. It cannot be denied that these issues did indeed occur in several cases in some Pesantren. For leaders of Pesantren, these issues certainly pose challenges that must be resolved. In this context, some leaders of Pesantren consider the idea of modernizing pesantren education to be a necessity in order to respond to these challenges, while others view modernization as a cause of disorientation for these institutions. The necessity of modernizing pesantren is described by Sutan Takir Alisjahbana in his statement, as quoted by Azyumardi Azra in one of his books. For Alisjahbana, pesantren education must be abandoned or at least transformed so that it can lead Muslims towards rationality and progress. If it is maintained, it is tantamount to maintaining the backwardness and stagnation of Muslims.<sup>1</sup> Alisjahbana sees pesantren as an institution that is not yet based on rationality.

However, some Islamic education figures believe that the idea of modernizing pesantren has caused disorientation and an identity crisis for these traditional educational institutions. For them, it is impossible to separate Western values from the idea of modernization, because the ideas and concepts of modernization were born from Western civilization.<sup>2</sup> The modernization of Pesantren is not a process with an end point, but rather an ongoing process of adaptation to the demands of the times. It is important to understand that the idea of modernization is not merely a series of temporary changes occurring in Pesantren, but rather stems from philosophical questions about what kind of modernism is used as the basis for the idea of modernization. In other words, modernism has a significant impact on the orientation and projection of the idea of modernizing Pesantren.

It is interesting to further examine the differences in the understanding of modernism between Azyumardi Azra and Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi. Both figures propose the idea of modernizing Islamic boarding schools based on two different modernisms and approaches. With his background as an academic, Azra formulates ideas for modernization using variables found in the systems approach.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi, with a background as a practitioner and academic, initiated a concept of pesantren modernization known as the Totalitas Kehidupan Pesantren (Total Pesantren Life).<sup>4</sup> Basically, K.H. Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi's ideas on

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<sup>1</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III* (Kencana, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Suparta and Anis Masykur, *Menakar Modernisasi Pendidikan Pesantren : Mengusung Sistem Pesantren Sebagai Sistem Pendidikan Mandiri* (Barnea Pustaka, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III*.

<sup>4</sup> Muhammad Thoriqul Islam, Imam Qodari, and Nawa Marjany, 'Islamic Boarding School Education and Its Renewal According to K.H. Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi', *PAEDAGOGIA*, 27.1 (2024), p. 103, doi:10.20961/paedagogia.v27i1.83899.

modernization are a continuation and development of the ideas on pesantren modernization from the three founders of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor.

The significant contributions of Azyumardi Azra and Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi to Islamic education in general have attracted many scholars to study their ideas. Some of the studies relevant to the research to be conducted are those carried out by Muhammad Nur Zaman and Munadi. These two scholars successfully revealed the solutions offered by Azra to various problems faced by Islamic boarding schools in modern times.<sup>5</sup> The results of this study are similar to those found by Heriyudanta in 2016, which only revealed the solutions offered by Azra, without further examining the modernism behind these solutions.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the study did not clarify the meaning of modernization used, whether modernization was limited to problem solving, transformation, reform, renewal, development, or even narrower than all of that.

Still on the same topic, but with a different object, the study conducted by Muhammad Thoriquil on the thoughts of Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi seems to be slightly better. At the very least, the study successfully reveals the new aspects of modernization in Islamic boarding schools promoted by Abdullah Syukri. This study concludes that there are three new aspects of Islamic boarding schools in Abdullah Syukri's thinking, namely the totality of life in the educational process, integral and comprehensive education, and boarding school-based education. The results of this study are actually the same as those studied by Nurdianto and Sudrajat in 2018, who also saw these three new aspects in Abdullah Syukri's thinking.<sup>7</sup> However, there are still several shortcomings in this study. First, the term used in the study is "Islamic Boarding School," which basically cannot fully represent the meaning and concept of pesantren. Second, the study has not revealed Abdullah Syukri's comprehensive understanding of modernization, so it has not succeeded in accurately identifying the modernity of pesantren in Abdullah Syukri's thinking. Based on several studies that have been conducted, none have significantly examined modernism and its relationship with the ideas of pesantren modernization from both figures, Azyumardi Azra and Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi.

This study argues that the idea of "pesantren modernization" was born from the modernism understood by each figure. Thus, starting from this modernism, it is possible to see the direction of the pesantren's projection and orientation in the proposed idea of modernization. The direction of the pesantren's projection and orientation may be possible as long as the concept of modernization and modernity

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<sup>5</sup> Muhamad Nur Zaman and Muhammad Munadi, 'Modernisasi Lembaga Pendidikan Pesantren Menurut Azyumardi Azra', *Al-Afkar: Journal for Islamic Studies*, 8.1 (2025), pp. 317–26, doi:10.31943/afkarjournal.v8i1.1022.

<sup>6</sup> M Heriyudanta, 'Modernisasi Pendidikan Pesantren Perspektif Azyumardi Azra', ... : *Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan Islam* 2016, 2016, doi:10.18326/mudarrisa.v8i1.145-172 Modernisasi.

<sup>7</sup> S A Nurdianto, 'Pemikiran KH Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi Tentang Konsep Pendidikan Yang Ideal Di Indonesia (1985-2011)', *Risalah* 2016, 2016 <<https://journal.student.uny.ac.id/index.php/risalah/article/view/1878>>.

does not refer to Western civilization. A suitable perspective to explain this is through the framework of multiple modernities, which emphasizes that modernity is not singular but diverse. This means that within the framework of multiple modernities, modernization is not only understood as a process of change in fulfilling the indicators of Western modernity but also as a movement of change that gives birth to its own modernity based on existing traditional values.

## METHOD

This research is a literature study that uses the works of Azyumardi Azra and Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi as primary sources. All writings that refer to these two figures are used as secondary sources. This study uses a philosophical and comparative approach to analyze and compare the thoughts of the two figures. The chosen method of analysis is content analysis, which is considered suitable for the chosen research approach.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The ideas of Azyumardi Azra and K.H. Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi regarding the modernization of pesantren education cannot be denied; there are clear differences in various aspects, as well as some similarities. In the context of these similarities and differences, a comparative approach seems to be the appropriate choice to open a dialogue between the two ideas. The presence of a dialogue between these two figures can provide a deeper understanding of the topic of modernization of pesantren education, which can also be taken into consideration by scholars and practitioners in choosing which ideas to use as a reference. This section will present a comparison of the ideas of the two figures, both in aspects where they agree and in aspects where they disagree.

The difference in ideas between Azyumardi Azra and Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi basically stems from different conceptions of what is meant by modern. It must be acknowledged that modernism for Azyumardi Azra is development.<sup>8</sup> This conclusion is also identified by Komaruddin in his study, which also emphasizes that modernism in Azra's school of thought means development.<sup>9</sup> The idea of modernization as development can be understood as explained by Wilbert E Moore. For Moore, modernization as development leads to what he calls economic development, where an increase in per capita income is a prerequisite for progress in developing regions. Moore adds that economic development has a high instrumental value in driving reform in underdeveloped regions.<sup>10</sup> In other words, modernization as development means that all reforms or changes are aimed at economic growth and strengthening. Therefore, it is not surprising that Azra's concept of modernizing pesantren education

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<sup>8</sup>Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III*. p.30

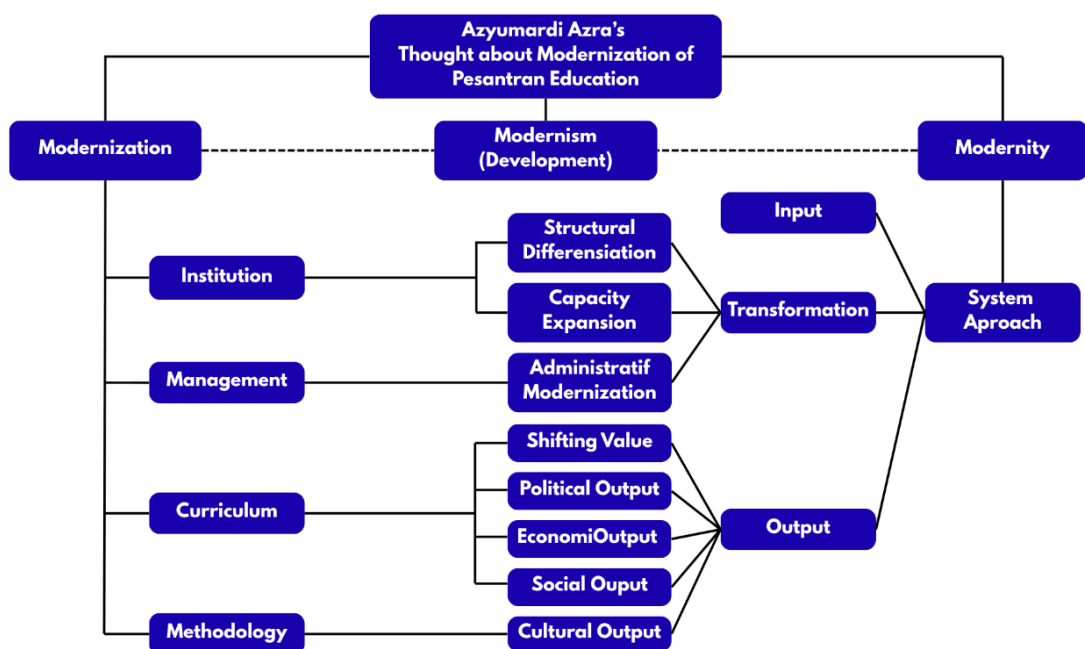
<sup>9</sup>Komarodin, 'Modernisasi Kurikulum Pesantren Menurut Azyumardi Azra', *Perspektive*, 10.2 (2017), pp. 46–65 <<https://ejournal.kopertais4.or.id/mataraman/index.php/perspektif/article/view/3329>>.

<sup>10</sup>Wilbert E. Moore, *Social Change* (Prentice Hall, 1974). p.96

tends to be oriented toward meeting the nation's development needs—rather than merely supplying market demands.

Contrary to Azra's modernism, in K.H Syukri's school of thought, modernism is understood as renewal.<sup>11</sup> The meaning of renewal is further emphasized by K.H Syukri as *harakat tajdid wa Islah*.<sup>12</sup> This type of modernism can be further explained by quoting John O. Voll's explanation. For Voll, the terms *tajdid* and *islah* reflect a continuous tradition.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, for Voll, renewal is not only oriented towards a better future, but also towards something that was idealized in the past.<sup>14</sup> Thus, modernism, understood as renewal, describes the meaning that modernization is not only always oriented towards what is idealized in the future, but also continues to preserve and maintain existing noble values. Based on the foundation of modernism as renewal, K.H Syukri constructed his idea of modernizing pesantren education.

**Picture 1.** Azyumarzi Azra's Thought on Modernization of Pesantren Education

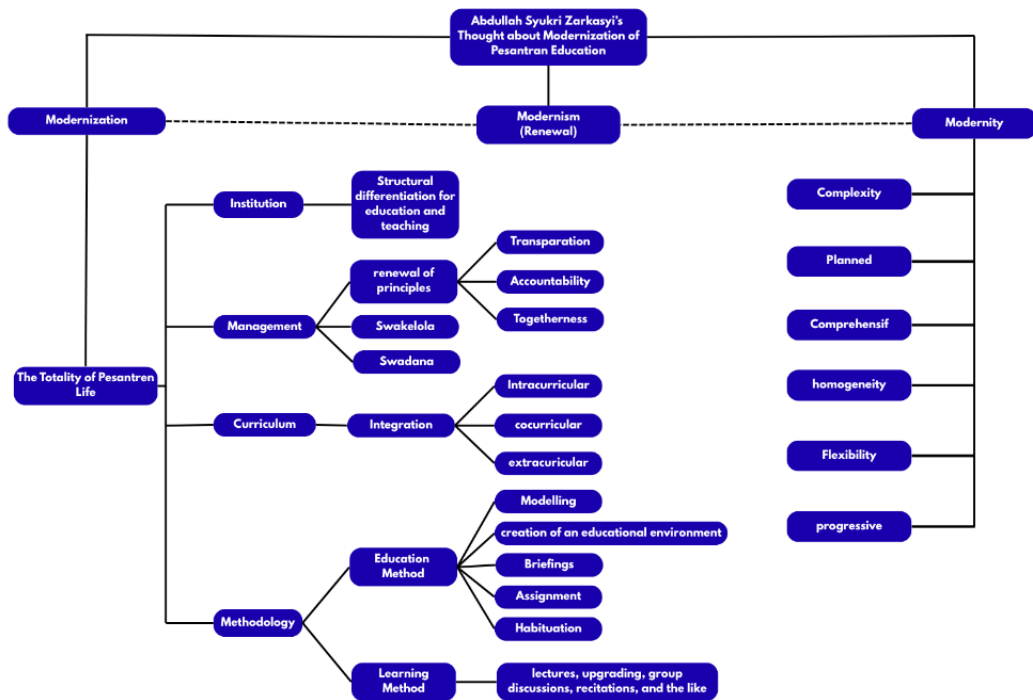


<sup>11</sup>Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi, *Gontor Dan Pembaharuan Pendidikan Pesantren* (Raja Grafindo Persada, 2005). p.1

<sup>12</sup>Hariyanto, *Sekilas Pikiran, Cita-Cita, Dan Harapan KH. Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi* (Ponorogo, 1992).

<sup>13</sup>Ali Anwar, *Pembaruan Pendidikan Di Pesantren Lirboyo Kediri* (Pustaka Pelajar, 2011). p.16

<sup>14</sup>Ali Anwar, *Pembaruan Pendidikan Di Pesantren Lirboyo Kediri*. p.18

**Picture 2.** Abdullah Syukri's Thought on Modernization of Pesantren Education

The differences in modernism embraced by Azyumardi Azra and K.H Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi must be acknowledged as having an impact on their respective ideas of modernizing pesantren education. At its core, both acknowledge that the concept of modernizing pesantren education stems from an effort to reinterpret knowledge, avoiding a dichotomy between religious knowledge and general knowledge. They also agree that modernizing pesantren education should be achieved by integrating the pesantren system with the classical, tiered education system. However, in the process of integration, there are several notable differences between the two. These differences lie in the genealogy of the classical system, the orientation of modernization, and so on. These conflicting ideas will be further identified in the limited aspects of institutionalization, curriculum, management, and methodology.

#### A. Institutional Aspects

An institution, as defined by the Cambridge Dictionary, is a custom or practice that has existed for a long time and is accepted as an important part of a society.<sup>15</sup> The definition of an institution can also be understood as explained by Emile Durkheim. For him, "institutions" are the totality of beliefs and behavioral norms that are carried out collectively.<sup>16</sup> From this definition, we can at least say that pesantren are

<sup>15</sup> Cambridge University, 'Institution', Cambridge Dictionary  
<<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/institution>>.

<sup>16</sup>Emile Durkheim, *The Role of Sociological Method* (University of Chicago Press, 1938). p.lvi

educational institutions since their emergence. This is because pesantren originated from collective activities aimed at transmitting knowledge, in this case, the kyai and santri as the actors. These activities involve interactions between Kyai and santri aimed at education by transmitting Islamic knowledge from Kyai to santri. On this basis, pesantren can be considered an Islamic educational institution.

Today, It must be acknowledged that the pesantren represents a noble heritage of Islamic civilization in Indonesia, one that has not only endured but has also continually evolved in response to the dynamics of changing times. Indeed, before undergoing modernization, pesantren could not be categorized as formal education<sup>17</sup> until the emergence of modernization ideas in pesantren education. These ideas would lead pesantren to a new face of education. Thus, pesantren can be considered a formal educational institution and recognized as one of the implementers in the national education system.<sup>18</sup>

In terms of institutional ownership, pesantren were initially privately owned institutions. They were typically owned by the Kyai who founded them. It is not surprising that pesantren were initially the private property of the Kyai who established them, as their origins stemmed from the presence of students seeking knowledge from that Kyai. Subsequently, upon the death of the Kyai, leadership and ownership of the pesantren were inherited through lineage.<sup>19</sup> In other words, ownership of the pesantren institution was akin to personal property.

Given the existing ownership system of pesantren institutions, Azyumardi Azra and K.H. Syukri agree that such a system is no longer adequate for the sustainability of pesantren. For Azra, such an institutional system cannot accommodate and anticipate broader social diversification. Furthermore, the ownership of Pesantren in this manner limits their ability to implement administrative modernization.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, for K.H. Syukri, such an institutional system for Pesantren makes them resemble a "small kingdom" of a dynasty passed down from generation to generation. Not all family members who become heirs understand the issues facing pesantren. Based on this, K.H. Syukri believes that the existing institutional system of pesantren is no longer suitable or adequate for pesantren.<sup>21</sup>

Seeing the problems with the pesantren institutional system as it stands, both Azra and K.H. Syukri agree to implement a collective leadership system in pesantren. However, differences in ideas between the two regarding collective leadership in

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<sup>17</sup> Pesantren were not initially considered formal education because they did not meet the criteria for formal education as defined by Law No. 20 of 2003. Formal education is education that is organized through a systematic, structured, graded, and tiered educational system consisting of basic education, secondary education, and higher education. Formal education is education that is provided in schools, universities, or other educational institutions.

<sup>18</sup>Republik Indonesia, *UU No. 18 Tahun 2020 Tentang Pesantren* (Indonesia, 2019).

<sup>19</sup>Zamakhshari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Tentang Pandangan Hidup Kyai Dan Visinya Mengenai Masa Depan Indonesia* (Lp3Es, 2011). p.59

<sup>20</sup>Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III*. p.33

<sup>21</sup>Zarkasyi, *Gontor Dan Pembaharuan Pendidikan Pesantren*. p.109

pesantren are inevitable. The differences regarding collective leadership will be explained further in the management aspect. It is important to first explain the structural differentiation of Pesantren in the thoughts of the two figures before explaining the issue of collective leadership.

In the context of institutional modernization of pesantren, the development of new institutions within the pesantren education system is an inevitability to adapt to existing needs. Simply put, the development of new institutions within the pesantren education system can be understood by borrowing Azra's term " , " which refers to the "structural differentiation" of pesantren. For Azra, this structural differentiation of pesantren is an inevitability to meet the specialized needs of society. Azra emphasizes that general education alone is no longer sufficient because it cannot meet the needs of society.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, if the direction of structural differentiation remains within the religious differentiation framework, Azra argues that it is no longer suitable or adequate. For Azra, the direction of structural differentiation in pesantren should focus on specialized education and vocational education. This can be explained by Azra's proposal regarding the types of education that pesantren can choose in their modernization process.<sup>23</sup> In essence, structural differentiation of pesantren for Azra is aimed at meeting the needs of society—not to mention supplying the needs of industry. The same applies to the expansion of pesantren's educational capacity.

Contrary to Azra's idea, for K.H Syukri, structural differentiation of pesantren should instead be aimed at the smooth running and success of the pesantren education and teaching system itself.<sup>24</sup> This means that the direction of differentiation for K.H Syukri does not lead to the fulfillment of specialization needs in society, but rather to the strengthening and improvement of the quality of pesantren education. In this context, K.H. Syukri emphasizes the importance of protection and projection strategies for pesantren education. Protection is intended to maintain and improve the quality of students, while projection is an effort by pesantren to develop the full potential of their students.<sup>25</sup>

The differences between the two figures' ideas regarding the structural differentiation of pesantren can be categorized into two directions of projection, namely internal and external. Azra's idea of structural differentiation of pesantren as an effort to accommodate social diversification in society can be said to be a direction of projection towards factors that exist externally to the pesantren education system. This means that pesantren, in developing their institutions, are required to always respond to social diversification in society. These factors of social diversification are essentially external to the pesantren education system. Therefore, it can be concluded

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<sup>22</sup>Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III*. p.33

<sup>23</sup>Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III*. p.135-136

<sup>24</sup>Zarkasyi, *Gontor Dan Pembaharuan Pendidikan Pesantren*. p.111

<sup>25</sup>Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi, *Manajemen Pesantren : Pengalaman Pondok Modern Gontor*, 2nd edn (Trimurti Press, 2005). p.37



that the direction of structural differentiation in pesantren for Azra is external to the pesantren education system.

This stands in contrast to K.H. Syukri's concept of structural differentiation within pesantren, which is primarily directed toward the internal system of pesantren education. It is not the social diversification of society, but rather the structural differentiation of pesantren to improve the success and smooth running of education and teaching that is the reason for K.H Syukri's institutional development of pesantren. It is evident in this idea that pesantren, in developing their institutions, do not necessarily have to always respond and adapt to societal diversification, but rather focus on improving the internal quality of the pesantren's educational system. For K.H Syukri, improving the internal quality of the pesantren education system will produce outputs that can always play a role in society, without having to specialize in one skill. Thus, the direction of the structural differentiation of pesantren institutions for K.H Syukri is directed at the internal pesantren education system itself.<sup>26</sup>

The next differences and similarities in ideas that are still within the scope of pesantren institutions are in the implications of efforts to integrate the pesantren education system with the general education system of madrasahs or public schools. Azyumardi Azra and K.H. Syukri both agree that the integration of these two education systems is an effort to modernize pesantren education. However, this agreement is not entirely the same in terms of the institutional concept of pesantren. These differences can be identified from the elements that constitute the pesantren institution. As defined by Durkheim, in the pesantren institution, we can conclude that the kyai and santri are the main elements.<sup>27</sup>

The differences between Azyumardi Azra and K.H Syukri's ideas on the modernization of pesantren institutions can be identified in the elements that constitute them, specifically in the element of Kyai. The integration of the pesantren education system with the madrasah education system has led to differences in the views of Azyumardi Azra and K.H Syukri regarding the authority of Kyai. In the context of the integration of the two systems, Azra acknowledges that there are indications of a separation of responsibilities between the Kyai as the leader of the pesantren and the head of the madrasah. In one of his works, Azra states:

*"Dalam rangka mewujudkan quality education, pesantren seyogyanya memberikan ruang gerak lebih besar pada kepala madrasah atau kepala sekolah agar: Pertama, dapat mengorganisasi dan memberdayakan sumber daya yang ada untuk memberikan dukungan yang memadai bagi terselenggaranya proses belajar mengajar yang maksimal, bahan pengajaran yang cukup, dan*

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<sup>26</sup>Zarkasyi, *Manajemen Pesantren : Pengalaman Pondok Modern Gontor*. p.76

<sup>27</sup> Kyai and santri are considered the elements that build the institutional framework of pesantren, based on Emile Durkheim's definition that an institution is a set of beliefs and behavioral norms that are collectively practiced. The interaction between Kyai and santri in the process of transmitting Islamic knowledge became the foundation for the emergence of pesantren. Therefore, it is concluded that the primary elements that build the institutional framework of pesantren are Kyai and santri.

*pemeliharaan fasilitas yang baik; kedua, dapat berkomunikasi secara teratur dengan kepemimpinan pesantren, guru, staf, orang tua, siswa, masyarakat, dan pemerintah setempat.”<sup>28</sup>*

Based on Azra's statement above, it is clear that there is a separation of authority between the Kyai and the madrasah head in the educational system. This means that the integration of the pesantren and madrasah education systems is limited to the adoption of the curriculum and educational methodology, in this case the hierarchical classical system. Simply put, Azra's idea is that pesantren are non-formal educational institutions for santri, while formal education is carried out by madrasah or public schools. This argument is reinforced by Azra's statement explaining:

*“Sejak 1970-an, sebagai konsekuensi dari developmentalism Orde Baru, pesantren juga mulai mengalami modernisasi, tegasnya sejak Mukti Ali menjabat menteri agama. Entry poin modernisasi pesantren itu adalah SKB tiga menteri No. 6 Tahun 1975 yang menggariskan bahwasanya madrasah – tentu masuk juga pesantren di dalamnya – pada semua jenjang sama posisinya dengan sekolah umum; dan untuk itu kurikulum madrasah harus 70 persen pelajaran umum dan 30 persen pelajaran agama.”<sup>29</sup>*

Azra's idea that the entry point for pesantren modernization lies in the enactment of the joint ministerial decree equating madrasahs and public schools clearly indicates that the integration of the pesantren and madrasah education systems is moving toward the national education system. It is therefore not surprising that a separation of authority between Kyai and madrasah heads or school principals has occurred. In other words, such ideas erode the position of Kyai as a central figure in the pesantren education system. Therefore, considering the role of Kyai as one of the elements that built the pesantren institution, the identity crisis of pesantren is inevitable in Azyumardi Azra's modernization ideas.

This is different from the idea of K.H Syukri. For K.H Syukri, the emergence of the Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al Islamiyah (KMI) institution is what became the entry point for the modernization of pesantren education. This means that pesantren are not modernized by referring to madrasah as found in the national education system. The principle of complete independence in the pesantren system is proven by this, as it does not refer to the classical education system promoted by the government, which is essentially a colonial Dutch education system. Thus, the modernization that occurs does not erode the authority of the Kyai as the central figure in pesantren education. As emphasized by K.H. Syukri, pesantren play the most essential role in the establishment, growth, development, and management of a pesantren.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, the ideas of Azyumardi Azra and K.H. Syukri share some similarities despite their stark differences regarding the institutional modernization of pesantren. Both agree on the structural differentiation of pesantren, although the direction of their differentiation ideas is opposite. K.H. Syukri focuses on internal strengthening, while

<sup>28</sup>Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III*. p.138

<sup>29</sup>Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III*. p.132

<sup>30</sup>Zarkasyi, *Gontor Dan Pembaharuan Pendidikan Pesantren*. p.63

Azra focuses on meeting external needs. Similarly, the Kyai as the central element in the pesantren institution. K.H. Syukri seeks to preserve the authority and dignity of the Kyai in his modernization ideas, while Azra attempts to erode it. Of course, the dialogue on institutional aspects serves only as an opening for further discussion between the two ideas. The debate over the modernization of pesantren education between Azyumardi Azra and K.H. Syukri becomes even more intriguing when brought into a new arena: management.

### **B. Management Aspects**

Management, as defined by Griffin, refers to a group of people who work together in a structured and coordinated manner to achieve a series of objectives.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Harold Koontz defines management as the process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals, working together in groups, efficiently achieve selected objectives.<sup>32</sup> In the context of modernizing pesantren education, the aspect of management is crucial for improving pesantren management. Before the emergence of the idea of modernization, it must be acknowledged that pesantren did not demonstrate structured and systematic management in their educational systems, as reflected in the definitions offered by Griffin and Knootz.

Based on what has been explained in the institutional aspect, the ownership and leadership system of Pesantren, which are privately owned and passed down from generation to generation, makes it difficult for them to progress and develop. This is because the ownership and leadership system of Pesantren is such that they are managed in a closed, centralized, and familial manner. In light of this, both Azyumardi Azra and K.H. Syukri agree that pesantren must be modernized by applying modern management principles. Although they agree on the need for modernization, debates over which principles should be applied in pesantren management are inevitable in the ideas of Azra and K.H. Syukri. Azra emphasizes the use of Total Quality Management (TQM) and Good Corporate Governance (GCG) principles as forms of modernization in pesantren management.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, K.H. Syukri proposes the principles of transparency, accountability, and togetherness as options to be applied in the modernization of pesantren education.<sup>34</sup>

The application of TQM and GCG principles as proposed by Azra can be seen as an effort to make Pesantren a institution that provides development needs—rather than an institution that supplies industrial needs. This is possible because, fundamentally, TQM and GCG are modern management principles commonly applied in companies or corporations that focus on institutional productivity and

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<sup>31</sup>Ricky W. Griffin, *Fundamentals of Management* (Cengage Learning, 2016). p.3

<sup>32</sup>Harold Koontz, Heinz Weihrich, and Mark V. Cannice, *Essentials of Management: An International, Innovation, and Leadership Perspective* (McGraw Hill Education, 2020). p.55

<sup>33</sup>Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III*. p.138

<sup>34</sup>Zarkasyi, *Gontor Dan Pembaharuan Pendidikan Pesantren*. p.115

product quality.<sup>35</sup> In the TQM principle, the key point when applied to educational institutions is a focus on the users of graduates.<sup>36</sup> In other words, the application of TQM principles in educational institutions means that these institutions must align with the needs of the field. In relation to Azra's modernization concept for pesantren, the implementation of such principles in pesantren management further strengthens the argument that pesantren education must be linked and matched with labor market needs.

Meanwhile, for K.H. Syukri, the management principles that must be applied in pesantren are transparency, accountability, and solidarity.<sup>37</sup> In addition to these three principles, K.H. Syukri also emphasizes the principle of independence through his concept of self-management and self-financing. The key point K.H. Syukri seeks to emphasize through his concepts of self-management and self-financing is the importance of independence for boarding schools, which should not depend on anyone, whether in terms of human resources or finances. Through such principles, K.H. Syukri believes that boarding schools can survive in various dynamics of the times.

In reality, the principles of pesantren management proposed by K.H. Syukri represent a rejection and improvement of the GCG concept proposed by Azra for the modernization of pesantren. Under the GCG principles, there are at least five principles of good governance that must be present: transparency, accountability, responsibility, independence/self-reliance, equality, and fairness.<sup>38</sup> In fact, K.H. Syukri agreed with the first four principles but disagreed with the fifth principle, which places greater emphasis on stakeholders. The principles of equality and fairness are fundamentally aimed at emphasizing the rights of justice in agreements with stakeholders, which, in Azra's concept of modernizing pesantren education, are industries. Based on this, the fifth principle in Azra's GCG concept can be understood as strengthening and emphasizing pesantren management to act fairly and fulfill the rights of industries as agreed in the agreement.<sup>39</sup>

Both Azyumardi Azra and K.H. Syukri agree that the modernization of pesantren education in terms of management should abandon old traditions that are no longer considered adequate. However, differences in the principles proposed are inevitable. It must be acknowledged that the management principles in Azra's modernization of pesantren management are rooted in corporate principles that prioritize product quality and service users. This means that students are once again emphasized and

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<sup>35</sup> Ahmad Baihaqi and Muhammad Yasin, 'Konsep Total Quality Management (Tqm) Dan Implementasi Konteks Pendidikan', *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 02.01 (2024), pp. 1–12, doi:10.57146/alwildan.v2i1.2033.

<sup>36</sup> Hasnadi, 'Total Quality Management: Konsep Peningkatan Mutu Pendidikan', *SAP (Susunan Artikel Pendidikan)*, 6.2 (2021), doi:10.30998/sap.v6i2.9331.

<sup>37</sup> Zarkasyi, *Gontor Dan Pembaharuan Pendidikan Pesantren*. p.115

<sup>38</sup> Thomas S. Kaihatu, 'Good Corporate Governance Dan Penerapannya Di Indonesia', *Manajemen Dan Kewirausahaan*, 8.1 (2006), doi:10.1021/bk-1991-0462.ch006.

<sup>39</sup> Kaihatu, 'Good Corporate Governance Dan Penerapannya Di Indonesia'.

projected to meet the needs of industry as their stakeholders. Meanwhile, K.H. Syukri, through the principles of transparency, accountability, and solidarity, strives to establish a high-quality and self-reliant pesantren management without sacrificing the students to meet industrial needs.

### **C. Curriculum Aspects**

The spectrum of meaning of curriculum in modern times is understood differently from previous eras. Abuddin Nata explains that the meaning of curriculum today is broader than in the past. In the traditional sense, curriculum is understood in a narrow sense, while in the modern definition, the meaning of curriculum is understood more broadly. After explaining several experts' opinions on curriculum, Nata identifies several characteristics of curriculum understood in a narrow sense. First, curriculum in a narrow sense tends to be viewed from the perspective of its content and function. The content and function of the curriculum are as a study program that must be learned by students, as lesson content, as planned activities, as learning outcomes, as social reproduction, and as curriculum as production. Second, the curriculum in the traditional and narrow sense is more focused on societal interests. Third, it describes efforts to transmit teachings, values, knowledge, skills, and so on. Fourth, the curriculum in the narrow sense describes the teaching-learning process that is solely teacher-centered.<sup>40</sup>

Unlike the traditional and narrow meaning of curriculum, in modern understanding, the meaning of curriculum is broader. As explained by Abuddin Nata, curriculum in modern understanding is understood as the following points. First, in terms of content and activities, it does not only include subjects taught in the classroom but also encompasses all activities that influence students' understanding, experiences, and skills in all fields. Second, in terms of process, it does not only include activities provided by teachers to students, but also specific and directed activities carried out by students. Activities, in terms of form, do not only include those formally defined in curriculum documents, but also other non-formal or invisible activities. This is what is subsequently known as the hidden curriculum (hidden curriculum).<sup>41</sup> Based on these two spectrums of curriculum meaning, it can be seen how Azyumardi Azra and K.H. Syukri view the modernization of pesantren education, particularly in terms of the curriculum.

Both Azra and K.H. Syukri agree with the idea of modernizing the pesantren curriculum by incorporating general knowledge into pesantren education, which previously focused solely on religious studies, more specifically on the study of classical Islamic texts. They also agree that the best way to accommodate this idea of integrating knowledge is through a pesantren education system that is integrated with the madrasah education system. However, the ideas for integrating the two

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<sup>40</sup>Abuddin Nata, *Ilmu Pendidikan Islam*, 1st edn (Kencana, 2010). p.123

<sup>41</sup>Nata, *Ilmu Pendidikan Islam*. p.125

educational systems are not entirely the same—to say the least—between Azyumardi Azra and K.H. Syukri.

One thing that must be highlighted in Azra's idea of modernizing the pesantren curriculum is his tendency to always make the pesantren participate and conform to the dynamics of national education. This stems from Azra's statement that the starting point of modernizing pesantren education was when madrasahs were placed on an equal footing with public schools through Law No. 6 of 1975.<sup>42</sup> From this statement, it can be understood that Azra's vision of integrating the pesantren education system with the madrasah education system involves integrating pesantren with madrasah or general schools under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Culture. Therefore, it is not surprising that Azra proposed types of pesantren education that, in essence, are not harmonious with the nature of pesantren education itself. In his vision, the types of education that pesantren could choose from are as follows<sup>43</sup> :

1. Pesantren that focus solely on tafaquh fi din. This type of education is similar to traditional pesantren before modernization.
2. Pesantren integrated with madrasahs following the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) and Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) curricula.
3. Pesantren integrated with Islamic schools following the Ministry of Education and Culture curriculum.
4. Pesantren integrated with vocational education models, such as vocational high schools (SMK).

The types of pesantren education offered by Azra above must be acknowledged as lacking the desire to make pesantren more independent and preserve their own identity rather than following national education curriculum models. All the types of pesantren education presented by Azra are developed in accordance with the curriculum proposed by the government. For example, one implication of this is the insufficient allocation of religious education compared to general subjects in the curriculum. Religious education is allocated only thirty percent of the curriculum, while general subjects receive seventy percent. In the context of Azra's vision, the independence of boarding schools as Islamic educational institutions—referred to by Nurcholis Madjid as indigenous educational institutions—is now being questioned. In reality, under Azra's vision, boarding schools are forced to conform to the national education system, which is inherently a colonial legacy.

Azra's efforts to align pesantren with the government-managed national education system contradict the views of K.H. Syukri, who sought greater autonomy in his modernization efforts. Although K.H. Syukri agreed to reform pesantren education by accommodating the madrasah education system, the madrasah in

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<sup>42</sup>Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III*. p.132

<sup>43</sup>Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III*. p.136

question was not the same as the madrasah as an Islamic educational institution under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Rather, it was a classical, tiered educational system, which, in K.H. Syukri's vision, was the "kulliyatul ' mua'llimin al-islamiah" system.<sup>44</sup> In other words, K.H. Syukri's modernization of the pesantren curriculum emphasizes the independence of pesantren in renewing their own educational models without having to project them toward curriculum development by the government.

In his modernization concept, K.H. Syukri did not propose alternative types of education for pesantren, as suggested by Azra, but instead formulated a comprehensive and holistic educational system. This comprehensive and holistic pesantren education system is known as the concept of total pesantren life. The core of the concept of totality of pesantren life lies in the integration of intracurricular, extracurricular, and cocurricular activities into one educational system. An interesting conclusion from the concept of totality of pesantren life is that pesantren, as Islamic educational institutions with a boarding system, not only provide pedagogical teaching, but also provide lessons from a living pedagogy.<sup>45</sup>

The differences in the ideas of modernizing the pesantren curriculum in the thoughts of Azyumardi Azra and K.H Syukri can be identified in the next stage through the spectrum of meaning of the curriculum as explained by Abuddin Nata. In Azra's thinking, the core of pesantren education lies in three things, namely: 1) the transmission of Islamic knowledge and sciences, 2) the preservation of Islamic traditions, and 3) the reproduction of ulama.<sup>46</sup> The three points presented by Azra can be classified within the traditional and narrow spectrum of curriculum meaning as explained by Nata. For K.H. Syukri, the core of pesantren education lies in what the students see, hear, feel, and experience for their education.<sup>47</sup> The meaning of the curriculum explained by K.H. . Syukri can be identified as the modern and broader spectrum of curriculum meaning as explained by Nata. Therefore, based on the spectrum of curriculum meaning explained by Nata, the pesantren curriculum in Azra's idea is considered narrower and smaller compared to the meaning of the pesantren curriculum in K.H. Syukri's broader school of thought. Based on this, it is not incorrect to say that Azra's modernization of the pesantren curriculum is an effort to diminish the pesantren curriculum—to not say destroy the identity of the pesantren.

#### **D. Methodological Aspects**

Methodology, in the context of education, as explained by Oemar Hamalik, is a procedure that encompasses various methods, approaches, and techniques of learning

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<sup>44</sup>Zarkasyi, *Gontor Dan Pembaharuan Pendidikan Pesantren*. p.112

<sup>45</sup>Saifuddin Alif Nurdianto and Ajat Sudrajat, 'Totalitas Kehidupan Pesantren: Tinjauan Historis Pemikiran K.H. Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi Tentang Konsep Pendidikan Yang Ideal Di Indonesia (1985-2011)', *Agastya: Jurnal Sejarah Dan Pembelajarannya*, 8.01 (2018), p. 35, doi:10.25273/ajsp.v8i01.1700.

<sup>46</sup>Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III*. p.136

<sup>47</sup>Zarkasyi, *Gontor Dan Pembaharuan Pendidikan Pesantren*. p.118

to achieve educational goals effectively and efficiently.<sup>48</sup> In relation to what was mentioned at the end, it seems that the traditional pesantren education methodology, which focuses on the study of classical Islamic texts, is no longer appropriate or adequate. Borrowing the term from K.H. Syukri, such pesantren education suffers from methodological weaknesses, as students only master the texts that have been taught but are weak in independently studying texts that have not been covered. This methodological weakness, according to K.H. Syukri, results in a longer and uncertain learning period for students<sup>49</sup> Therefore, based on this, the traditional pesantren education methodology is ineffective and inefficient.

In the ideas of Azyumardi Azra and K.H. Syukri, both agree that the educational methodology of Pesantren education needs to be modernized, as they see the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the traditional educational methodology of Pesantren education as explained earlier. Both Azyumardi Azra and K.H. Syukri also agree that the modernization of the educational methodology of Pesantren education should be achieved by implementing a hierarchical classical system in Pesantren education. However, the ideas of Azra and K.H. Syukri differ in terms of the implementation of this hierarchical classical system.

For Azra, the implementation of the tiered classical system was carried out by integrating Education of pesantren with madrasahs or public schools under the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religious Affairs<sup>50</sup> Thus, the educational levels were adjusted to those of madrasahs or public schools, which usually consist of three years of junior high school and three years of senior high school. Meanwhile, according to K.H. Syukri, the implementation of the classical tiered system is carried out through the KMI as an institution that embodies the madrasah system within the pesantren education system. The study period at the KMI is divided into two parts: six years for students who have graduated from elementary school and four years for students who have graduated from junior high school or its equivalent.<sup>51</sup>

Essentially, the difference in the ideas of Azyumardi Azra and K.H. Syukri regarding the methodology of pesantren education stems from their differing perspectives on the pesantren curriculum. Azra views the pesantren curriculum in a traditional and narrow manner, so the methodology he proposes is limited to the meaning of education as instruction. In contrast, K.H. Syukri views the curriculum in a more modern and broad manner. Therefore, the educational methodology also encompasses the meaning of education as the overall experience and understanding gained by students for educational purposes. In simple terms, it can be understood that the pesantren education methodology in Azra's ideas is limited to the meaning of learning methodology that follows the methods in the national curriculum.

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<sup>48</sup>Oemar Hamalik, *Proses Belajar Mengajar* (Bumi Aksara, 2014). p.50

<sup>49</sup>Zarkasyi, *Gontor Dan Pembaharuan Pendidikan Pesantren*. p.163

<sup>50</sup>Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III*. p.136

<sup>51</sup>Zarkasyi, *Gontor Dan Pembaharuan Pendidikan Pesantren*. p.112



Meanwhile, the pesantren education methodology of proposed by K.H. Syukri is not limited to the meaning of teaching but emphasizes a methodology that encompasses all activities of the santri in the pesantren. This educational methodology involves setting an example, creating an environment, providing guidance, assigning tasks, and establishing habits. As for teaching methodology, which covers cognitive aspects, K.H. Syukri emphasizes the use of lectures, discussions, question and answer sessions, etc.<sup>52</sup>

The similarities and differences, or even contradictions, between the ideas of modernizing pesantren education in the thought groups of Azyumardi Azra and K.H. Syukri reveal their respective tendencies to preserve or erode the identity of the pesantren as an indigenous Islamic educational institution. In simple terms, the similarities and differences in the above aspects can be presented in the following table:

## CONCLUSION

The difference in the ideas of modernization of pesantren education according to Azyumardi Azra and K.H. Syukri is basically a fundamental difference that lies in the different ways the two figures understand modernization. For Azra, modernization is development, while for K.H. Syukri, modernization is renewal. The implication is that modernization for Azra tends to be directed at meeting development needs without paying too much attention to the identity and orientation of pesantren. Meanwhile, for K.H. Syukri, modernization is carried out to respond to the dynamics of the times and improve quality while maintaining the identity and orientation of Islamic boarding schools. More detailed explanations on institutional aspects, management, curriculum, and methodology are evidence of this. In terms of institutional aspects, both agree that pesantren should be collectively owned institutions. However, they disagree on the structural differentiation of Islamic boarding schools. Azra places more importance on structural differentiation as a response to social diversification, while K.H. Syukri prioritizes the smooth running of the educational process in pesantren. In terms of management, both Azra and K.H. Syukri agreed to renew the management principles in pesantren administration, although they differed on which principles should be applied. Azra offered TQM and GCG, while K.H. Syukri offered the principles of transparency, accountability, and togetherness, supported by the principles of self-reliance and self-management. In terms of curriculum, both of them share the idea of incorporating general knowledge into pesantren teaching. However, they differ in the direction, format, and scope of the pesantren curriculum. Similarly, in terms of methodology, both Azra and K.H. Syukri agree on implementing a tiered classical learning system in pesantren education. Azra proposes a teaching method, while K.H. Syukri proposes both a teaching method and an educational method.

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<sup>52</sup>Zarkasyi, *Gontor Dan Pembaharuan Pendidikan Pesantren*. p.137

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