ISSN: 3066-7194
Research Article

Novel Journal of Applied Sciences Research

Advancements in Vertical Axis Wind Turbine Technology

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Submitted: 27 April 2024 **Accepted:** 11 May 2024 **Published:** 17 May 2024

https://doi.org/10.63620/MKNJASR.2024.1013

Citation: *Grimm,, F. B. (2024). Advancements in Vertical Axis Wind Turbine Technology. Nov Joun of Appl Sci Res, 1(3), 01-07.*

Abstract

Vertical-axis wind turbines (VAWTs) have garnered significant attention as a promising alternative to traditional horizontal-axis designs due to their inherent advantages, including omnidirectional wind capture and reduced visual impact. However, existing VAWT configurations often exhibit suboptimal performance characteristics and structural vulnerabilities, hindering their widespread adoption in renewable energy applications. This study presents a comprehensive analysis of state-of-the-art VAWT technologies and proposes an innovative integrated framework aimed at addressing key limitations and enhancing overall performance. The proposed VAWT architecture integrates advanced aerodynamic profiles, robust structural support systems, efficient drive mechanisms, and electromagnetic stabilization systems to optimize energy conversion efficiency and operational versatility. By leveraging synergies between diverse subsystems, the envisioned VAWT design demonstrates superior performance characteristics across a broad spectrum of wind conditions. Variable blade positioning, adaptive aerodynamic profiles, and scalable support structures contribute to enhanced energy extraction efficiency, grid integration capabilities, and structural resilience. This study highlights the potential of integrated VAWT technologies to overcome existing challenges and unlock new opportunities for sustainable energy generation. Continued research and development efforts are essential to further refine and validate the proposed VAWT framework, paving the way for its widespread deployment in renewable energy ecosystems. By fostering collaboration between academia, industry, and government stakeholders, this research aims to accelerate the transition towards a cleaner, greener future powered by innovative VAWT solutions.

Keywords: Vertical-Axis Wind Turbine, VAWT, Aerodynamics, Structural Engineering, Electromagnetic Drive Systems, Energy Conversion Efficiency, Sustainability

Introduction

Wind energy stands as a cornerstone of the global renewable energy landscape, offering a promising avenue for addressing the escalating challenges of climate change and fossil fuel depletion. While horizontal-axis wind turbines (HAWTs) have traditionally dominated the wind power sector, vertical-axis wind turbines (VAWTs) have garnered increasing attention for their potential to revolutionize wind energy conversion. Unlike their horizontal counterparts, VAWTs possess inherent advantages such as omnidirectional wind capture and simplified installation, making them particularly suitable for urban and decentralized applications. Moreover, they eliminate the need for wind tracking, they offer simplified ground-level generator maintenance, reduced noise pollution due to lower rotational speeds, and higher acceptance among populations, making them particularly suitable for on-shore locations. However, despite their promise, VAWTs have faced obstacles related to aerodynamic inefficiencies, structural limitations, and reliability concerns. Consequently, there exists a pressing need to advance VAWT technology through interdisciplinary research efforts that span engineering, aerodynamics, materials science, and environmental studies. This study aims to delve into the multifaceted challenges and opportunities surrounding VAWT development, offering a comprehensive examination of existing technologies and proposing innovative solutions to enhance performance and scalability [1].

Main Part

Aerodynamic System Design

The proposed wind turbine design introduces a pioneering approach to aerodynamics, characterized by a multi-part rotor blade with a variable airfoil profile tailored to maximize energy capture efficiency across a spectrum of wind conditions. In this embodiment, the rotor blade consists of three segments, each featuring an adjustable airfoil profile composed of rigid wing sections. The integration of hinges with defined axes of rotation enables the front and rear wing segments to pivot, transitioning the airfoil profile from symmetrical to asymmetric configurations. During operation, the orientation of the variable airfoil profile optimally aligns with the wind direction, enhancing aerodynamic performance and mitigating rotor speed to ensure operational stability even in turbulent conditions. Due to the lower speed number characteristic of vertical-axis wind turbines, it may only be necessary to throttle at higher wind speeds, thus minimizing the need for frequent adjustments and contributing to the overall efficiency and reliability of the system. Furthermore, meticulous attention to detail, including overlapping joints with hairline gaps to minimize flow disruption and strategic articulation of the rotor blade segments, facilitates seamless adaptation to varying wind speeds and directions. These adjustments not only enhance the efficiency of vertical-axis wind turbines (VAWTs) but also enable their operation across a wide range of wind speeds, from gentle breezes to storm conditions, ensuring consistent energy generation capabilities. Additionally, the incorporation of wing blade adjustment mechanisms offers further advantages. These mechanisms contribute to increased efficiency of the wind turbine by generating stronger lift of the rotor blades. In addition, during adverse weather conditions such as storms, the ability to adjust the rotor blades to reduce lift can lower stress on the system, enhancing operational stability and reliability [2].

The wind of change has reached the Baltic Sea. The rotor blades of this elegant turbine are designed with a hyperbolic curvature. At the upper end of the turbine, the diameter reaches its utmost extension with a diameter of 200 meters, while at the lower end the diameter will be only 100 meters. This allows the lambda Value to be kept constant, the result of which will be twice the inflow speed at the top compared to half of the speed at the bottom of the rotor. Raised 80m above sea level, the turbine will have a total height of 600m and will deliver 52.4 MW at a wind speed of 15 m/s. In addition, the VAWT's lightweight structure has a power-to-weight ratio of only 343 tons per MW. State of the art HAWT turbines will be challenged by this design with undeniable performance arguments.

Figure 1:

Figure 2:

The RES GigaTube project challenges conventional turbine designs. A closer look at the advantages should convince you of the concept's superiority. The turbine shown here is slightly taller than the conventional ENERCON E126 turbine, which is one of the best HAWTs in terms of efficiency and design. The VAWT GigaTube shown on the left, with a height of 235 metres and a diameter of 70 metres, has a much better power-to-weight ratio of 360 tons/MW than the ENERCON E126 of 933 tons/MW, which speaks for itself. The Gigatube design uses variable asymmetric profiles that provide up to 30% more lift than a Darrieus rotor with symmetric profiles. Structurally, all load-bearing elements are subject to either tensile or compressive forces. However, at high speeds where lambda reaches a factor of 5, centrifugal forces must be carefully monitored. Radial spokes in the cavity between the mast and rotor divide the cavity into relatively short sections. In addition, the leeward blades are connected to the windward blades. At wind speeds above 12 m/s the centrifugal force will outweigh the lift created by the asymmetric profiles in both semicircular orbits. For this and other reasons, this turbine can be built much more economically than the reference turbine on the right [3].

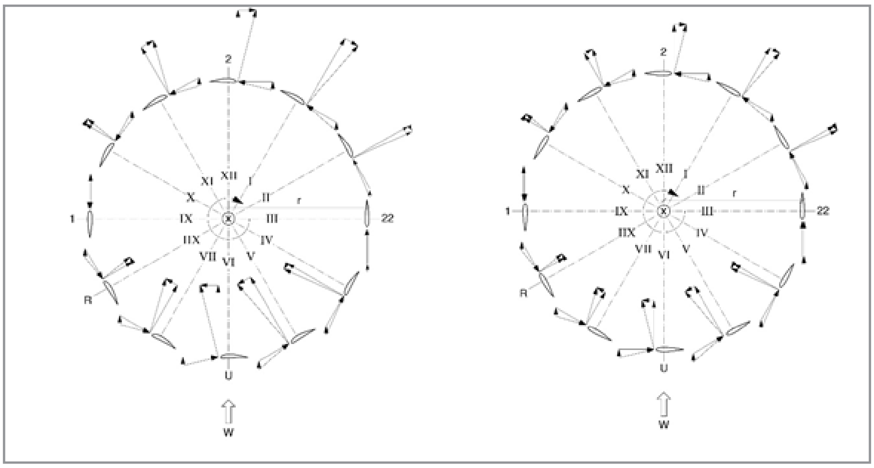

Figure 3: The variable wing profile in twelve revolution positions of the rotor for wind speeds 3-6 according to the Beaufort scale with a vector representation of the aerodynamically induced forces in the horizontal section.

Moreover, a closer look at the advantages of the proposed VAWT design compared to conventional HAWTs provides compelling evidence of its superiority. For instance, the VAWT GigaTube, with a height of 235 meters and a diameter of 70 meters, demonstrates a much better power-to-weight ratio of 360 tons/MW compared to the ENERCON E126 turbine, which has a ratio of 933 tons/MW. This significant difference underscores the efficiency and structural innovation of the VAWT design. Additionally, the use of variable asymmetric profiles in the GigaTube design results in up to 30% more lift compared to a Darrieus rotor with symmetric profiles. However, it's crucial to note that at high speeds, where lambda reaches a factor of 5, centrifugal forces must be carefully monitored. The inclusion of radial spokes in the cavity between the mast and rotor, along with the connection of leeward blades to windward blades, addresses this concern and ensures the structural integrity and operational stability of the turbine even in challenging conditions [4].

Calculation for a capacity 600m Gigatube with a diameter of 230m and a rotor height of 600m:
Power according to Betz: $P = 16/27 * \rho/2 * A * v^3$
Air Density $\rho = 1.2 kg/m^3$
Inflow Area $A = 230m * 600m = 138{,}000m^2$
Wind Speed $v = 12m/s$
$P = 16/27 * 1.2kg/m^3 / 2 * 138{,}000m^2 * (12m/s)^3$
$P = 84.8$ MW

Estimated Weight Steel Base up to 200m 14,000 t
Generator 1,200 t
Superstructure Rotor Blades 2,560 t
Steel Cables 2,000 t
Actuators 1,000 t
Total Weight 20,760 t
Power to Weight Ratio 246 t/MW
(4.7 times better than ENERCON E126)

Support System Configurations
The supporting structure of the turbine consists of a central mast supporting a series of nozzles connected to the rotor formed by a cable net structure supporting variable rotor blades. These blades have a pivoting leading edge and a pivoting trailing edge connected to a rigid central section supported by the cable net. The rotor itself is divided into a windward and a leeward half. The blades themselves are variable, consisting of a rigid central section and pivoting nose and tail sections, which are either pneumatically or electrically actuated. Sensor-controlled, one diameter of the wind turbine is always oriented perpendicular to the prevailing wind direction, so that the suction side of the rotor blades faces inwards in the windward rotation and outwards in the leeward rotation. When the lambda reaches a value greater than 2, centrifugal forces override the lift generated by the rotor blades. The answer to this problem, which increases by a lambda factor up to 5, is the concave surface of the hyperbolic prestressed cable net. Spoked wheels in the void between the mast and the rotor will transfer the loads from the leeward to the windward side, reducing the lateral force acting on the mast. This type of design far outperforms any other type of wind turbine in its ability to ration power. Additionally, two

distinct support system configurations complement the aerodynamic advancements of the proposed wind turbine design. The first configuration, a self-supporting lattice shell, embodies a robust framework constructed from interconnected support profiles and tension cables, providing unparalleled stability and enabling the integration of three-part rotor blades with variable airfoil profiles. Conversely, the second configuration adopts a guyed cable structure suspended from the central mast, offering a flexible and scalable solution suitable for diverse deployment scenarios. By leveraging support and tension cables anchored to the mast, this configuration achieves optimal load distribution and dynamic stabilization, enabling efficient operation even at heights exceeding 1000 meters. The dynamic interplay between the support system and aerodynamic components ensures the structural integrity and operational resilience of the wind turbine under varying environmental conditions, paving the way for sustainable energy generation on a monumental scale [5].

Figure 4: The variable wing profile as a symmetrical wing profile in twelve revolution positions of the rotor for wind speeds 7-9 according to the Beaufort scale with a vector representation of the aerodynamically induced forces in the horizontal section.

The supporting structure of the turbine consists of a central mast supporting a series of nozzles connected to the rotor formed by a cable net structure supporting variable rotor blades. These blades have a pivoting leading edge and a pivoting trailing edge connected to a rigid central section supported by the cable net. The rotor itself is divided into a windward and a leeward half. The blades themselves are variable, consisting of a rigid central section and pivoting nose and tail sections, which are either pneumatically or electrically actuated. Sensor-controlled, one diameter of the wind turbine is always oriented perpendicular to the prevailing wind direction, so that the suction side of the rotor blades faces inwards in the windward rotation and outwards in the leeward rotation. When the lambda reaches a value greater than 2, centrifugal forces override the lift generated by the rotor blades. The answer to this problem, which increases by a lambda factor up to 5, is the concave surface of the hyperbolic prestressed cable net. Spoked wheels in the void between the mast and the rotor will transfer the loads from the leeward to the windward side. In this way, the lateral force acting on the mast can be reduced. This type of design far outperforms any other type of wind turbine in its ability to ration power.

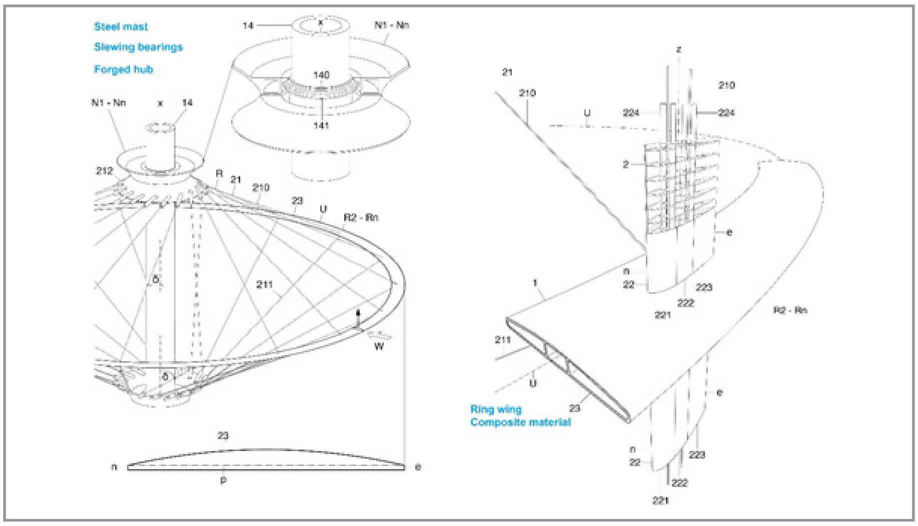

Figure 5:

Advanced Drive and Control Systems

In addition to the aerodynamic and structural innovations, the proposed wind turbine design incorporates advanced drive and control systems to optimize energy conversion efficiency and operational performance. Pneumatic actuators and electric motors facilitate precise blade adjustment, enabling real-time optimization of rotor blade angles and rotational speeds to maximize power output and adapt to changing wind conditions. These actuators, integrated seamlessly into the support structure, ensure smooth and responsive operation while minimizing mechanical losses and enhancing overall system efficiency. Furthermore, a sophisticated dynamic stabilization system, driven by synchronously excited three-phase alternating current machines, provides active tilt protection and contactless suspension of the rotor, ensuring stable and reliable operation even in adverse weather conditions. By synergistically integrating cutting-edge technologies across aerodynamics, structural engineering, and control systems, the proposed wind turbine design represents a significant advancement in renewable energy technology, offering a pathway towards sustainable and resilient wind power generation on a global scale.

Pneumatic Actuators for Blade Adjustment

The utilization of pneumatic actuators constitutes a pivotal aspect of the proposed wind turbine design, enabling precise and responsive adjustment of rotor blade configurations to optimize aerodynamic performance. By employing tensile-stiff and flexibly bendable wing shells connected to ribs arranged transversely to the chord line, the rotor blades achieve dynamic adaptability to varying wind conditions. The integration of bellows connected to the support structure allows for controlled deformation of the variable wing profile, with compressed air serving as the driving force for blade adjustment. Through meticulous engineering, including the implementation of overlapping joints and hairline gaps to minimize flow disruption, the pneumatic actuators ensure seamless transition between different blade positions, thereby enhancing overall energy capture efficiency and operational stability of the wind turbine.

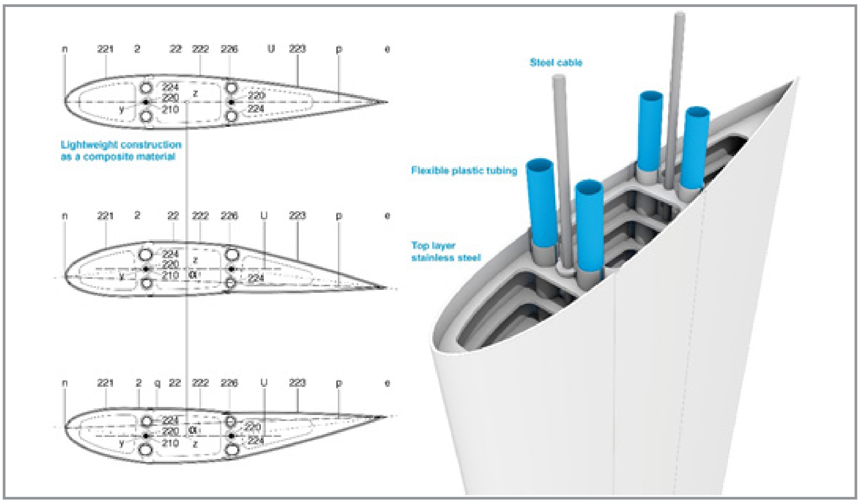

Figure 6:

Electric Actuators for Blade Adjustment

In parallel with pneumatic actuators, electric actuators play a vital role in facilitating precise blade adjustment and control within the proposed wind turbine design. Linear stepper motors integrated into the support structure enable electromagnetically driven translational movement of cylindrical slides, resulting in controlled pivoting of front and rear wing segments relative to the middle wing segment. This sophisticated actuation mechanism, characterized by its responsiveness and accuracy, allows for seamless adaptation of rotor blade configurations to prevailing wind conditions, thereby optimizing energy conversion efficiency and operational performance. Furthermore, the utilization of radial stepper motors with opposing excitation windings offers additional flexibility and robustness, ensuring reliable blade adjustment capabilities across a wide range of operating conditions.

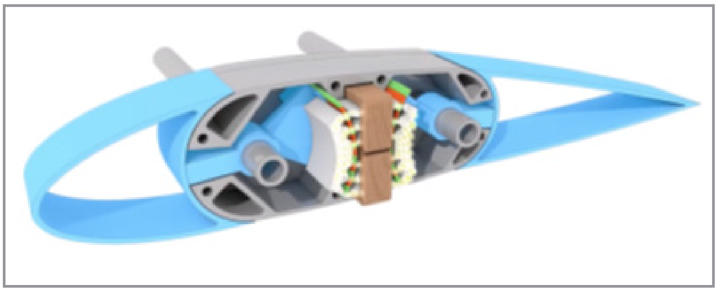

Figure 7:

Dynamic Stabilization System

At the core of the proposed wind turbine design lies a dynamic stabilization system engineered to ensure operational stability and reliability under diverse environmental conditions. The synchronously excited three-phase alternating current machines, equipped with either permanent magnets or supporting magnets with excitation windings, provide the foundation for active tilt protection and contactless suspension of the rotor. By subdividing the ring generator into independently switchable segments and strategically activating motor generators based on wind direction, the dynamic stabilization system effectively counteracts tilt forces, ensuring precise alignment of the rotor and minimizing mechanical stress on the support structure. This proactive approach to dynamic stabilization enhances the overall safety and performance of the wind turbine, enabling uninterrupted energy generation even in challenging wind regimes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the proposed wind turbine design represents a paradigm shift in renewable energy technology, leveraging innovative aerodynamic concepts, advanced support systems, and sophisticated control mechanisms to maximize energy capture efficiency and operational reliability. By integrating cutting-edge technologies across multiple disciplines, the design offers a scalable and sustainable solution for wind power generation, capable of operating efficiently across a wide range of wind conditions. With its dynamic stabilization system, responsive blade adjustment mechanisms, and robust structural framework, the proposed wind turbine design holds immense potential to revolutionize the renewable energy landscape, paving the way for a more sustainable and resilient future [1-5].

Necessary in order for the wind turbine to go into production is continued research and development, ensuring the refinement of the proposed VAWT framework. This iterative process will be crucial for addressing any remaining challenges, optimizing performance, and ensuring the reliability of the technology. Moreover, fostering collaboration between academia, industry, and government stakeholders will be essential for accelerating the transition towards a cleaner, greener future powered by innovative VAWT solutions. Currently university students engage in research projects focused on improving aerodynamic efficiency, structural integrity, and control systems of VAWTs. This involves computational modeling and wind tunnel testing to optimize turbine design and performance. By aligning efforts and resources towards this common goal, we can unlock the full potential of vertical-axis wind turbine technology and propel the widespread deployment of sustainable energy solutions on a global scale.

Reference Signs

Wind turbine	1	Rotor blade	2
Vertical rotation axis	X	Lattice shell	20
Rotation axis	y	Support profile	200
Longitudinal axis	z	Node	201
Truss	A	Cable structure	21
Base	B	Supporting cable	210
Ring beam	R1-Rn	Tension cable	211
Hub	N1-Nn	Plate spring	212
Positive angle of attack	a	Variable wing profile	22
Rotor	R	Radius	r, r1
Orbit	u	Wing tip	n
Offset angle	ö	Wing trailing edge	e
Hight	h	Profile chord	p
Inclination angle	ß	Profile thickness	q
Wind direction	w	Hinge	220
Air gap	a	Front wing segment	221
Motor generator	10	Middle wing segment	222
Stator	100	Rear wing segment	223
Travel path	101	Rib	224
Runner	102	Counterweight	225
Excitation winding	103	Hairline joint	226
Permanent magnet	104	Wing shell	227
Cable	105	Ring wing	23
Hollow profile	11	Actuator	24
Track	110	Hose	240
Undercut	111	Pneumatic muscle	241

Rail	112	Stepper motor	242
Tilt protection	12	Threaded section	243
Undercarriage	13	Step-ratchet mechanism	244
Mast	14	Bellows	245
Conical roller bearing	140	Orbit position	I-XII

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