USET-CONNECT

INNOVATIVE COMMUNICATION & TRANSFORMATIVE SCHOLARSHIP

December 2025

HIS EXCELLENCY, PRESIDENT ADAMA BARROW INAUGURATES USET'S MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR CAMPUS IN BRIKAMA

- ✓ USET validates its policies and conditions of Service
- ✓ STEM and TVET students compete for Prizes during USET's Innovation Week
- ✓ The validation of MoHERST gender policy strengthens participation of the female gender in technical and engineering education in The Gambia
- ✓ USET signs strategic partnership agreements with Chinese polytechnics and universities

The Gambia University of Applied Science, Engineering and Technology

USET

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION
FOR AN ENTREPRENEURIAL CITIZENRY

ENGR. EBRIMA CHAM
CHAIRPERSON, GOVERNING COUNCIL
THE GAMBIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCE,
ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY

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Vice-Chancellor's Foreword

It is with immense pride and a deep sense of purpose that I welcome you to the maiden edition of the Gambia University of Applied Science, Engineering and Technology USET University Magazine (USET-CONNECT). This publication marks a significant milestone in the growth and evolution of our institution, and it stands as a testament to our shared commitment to excellence in science, engineering and technology education.

USET was established with a clear and ambitious vision: to be among the leading universities in Sub-Saharan Africa producing engineers, technicians, and innovators equipped with an entrepreneurial mindset. This magazine reflects that vision by providing a platform for intellectual exchange, innovation, creativity, and critical thought within our academic community.

As a Centre of Excellence, USET is dedicated to delivering high-quality certificate, diploma, and degree programmes that respond to the needs of industry, society, and national development. Our emphasis on entrepreneurship ensures that our graduates are not only technically competent but also capable of transforming ideas into viable solutions, enterprises, and technologies that address real-world challenges.

Within the pages of this magazine, readers will encounter the diverse talents and achievements of our students, faculty, and researchers. From academic discourse and technological innovations to creative expression and campus life, this publication captures the dynamic spirit of USET and the values that define us innovation, integrity, collaboration, and impact.

I commend the Editorial Board and all contributors for their dedication and professionalism in bringing this maiden edition to life. Their efforts demonstrate the importance of communication and knowledge sharing in advancing our institutional mission.

As you read this magazine, I encourage you to see it not merely as a record of our activities, but as a symbol of our aspirations and our determination to shape the future through education, research, and entrepreneurship. May this publication continue to grow in relevance and influence, just as USET continues to strengthen its position as a leading institution in Sub-Saharan Africa.

I invite you all students, staff, alumni, partners, and friends of the university to take pride in this achievement and to remain steadfast in supporting USET's journey toward excellence.

Engr. Professor Nazmat Surajudeen-Bakinde. Vice-Chancellor.
The Gambia University of Applied Science, Engineering and Technology (USET)

Editorial

USET-CONNECT: Engineering the Future with Innovative Communication and Transformative Scholarship

At USET, we believe that education must go beyond the classroom to inspire innovation, entrepreneurship, and solutions to real-world challenges. This maiden edition of our university magazine marks an important milestone in our journey toward excellence in science, engineering and technology."

It is with great pride and optimism that we present the maiden edition of the USET University Magazine (USET-Connect) a publication that reflects our identity, our aspirations, and our commitment to shaping the future of science, engineering, and technology in Sub-Saharan Africa.

USET was founded on a bold and purposeful vision: to be among the leading universities in Sub-Saharan Africa producing engineers, technicians, and innovators with an entrepreneurial mindset. This magazine is an extension of that vision. It serves as a platform where ideas are nurtured, innovation is celebrated, and the intellectual life of our university is documented and shared.

Guided by our mission to consolidate USET's position as a Centre of Excellence, this publication highlights the academic rigor, technical competence, and entrepreneurial spirit that define our certificate, diploma and degree programmes. Within these pages, readers will encounter scholarly insights, student innovations, research highlights, industry perspectives, and creative expressions that demonstrate the practical relevance of education at USET. In this effort, USET-CONNECT aims to foster innovative communication and transformative scholarship especially in the areas of:

- USET news and success stories
- Trends in Science and Engineering Education
- Emerging insights in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)
- Innovation and Entrepreneurship
- In-depth features and thought leadership articles.

In an era where knowledge must translate into solutions, USET stands at the intersection of theory and practice. Our strong focus on science, engineering, and technology reinforced by entrepreneurship prepares our graduates not only to seek employment, but to create opportunities, drive innovation, and contribute meaningfully to socio-economic development.

As a maiden edition, this magazine symbolizes a beginning one rooted in excellence, collaboration, and ambition. It is a collective effort of students, faculty, researchers, and administrators who share a common belief in the power of knowledge, creativity, and enterprise.

We invite our readers to engage thoughtfully with this publication, to be inspired by its content, and to see in it a reflection of USET's unwavering commitment to academic excellence and entrepreneurial impact.

May this magazine grow alongside the university, documenting our achievements and charting our progress as we engineer solutions for today and innovations for tomorrow.

Editorial Board

USET HOSTS HISTORIC MAIDEN CONVOCATION CEREMONY AND COMMISSIONS ITS PERMANENT SITE AT BRIKAMA

Figure Honourable Minister of Higher Education (L), Preseident Adama Barrow(c), Vice-Chancellor, USET(R)

The Gambia University of Applied Science, Engineering and Technology (USET) marked a defining moment in its history with the holding of its Maiden Convocation Ceremony, alongside the inauguration of the first phase of its Campus in Brikama.

This event, held on 21st June 2025, was presided over by His Excellency President Adama Barrow, the Chancellor of the University.

The ceremony, which was hosted by the Vice-Chancellor Professor Nazmat Toyin Surajudeen Bakinde, brought together dignitaries from across The Gambia and beyond.

The graduating students comprised the first cohort of the College of Science and Engineering (BSc Engineering students), as well as students from the Institute of Technology and the Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (Certificate and Diploma students).

The University constitutes three vibrant academic divisions, which are:

- The Institute of Technology (IoT)
- The Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IIE)
- The College of Science and Engineering (CoSE)

Together, these constituent divisions offer a diverse range of academic and professional programs.

The University is fully equipped with modern science laboratory facilities through the intervention of the World Bank's Africa Centre of Excellence (ACE) project. It enjoys partnership with De Montfort University (England), Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (Ghana), as well as support from TAF Africa Global.

The convocation united graduates from the 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 academic sessions, which included the University's first cohort of BSc Engineering students.

In her keynote address, the Vice -Chancellor, Prof. Nazmat Surajudeen Bakinde took the opportunity to welcome everyone to the event. She described the day as a landmark in USET's mission to advance applied knowledge, innovation, and national development.

She pointed out that this event marked a significant milestone, not just in the lives of the graduating students, but also in the continuing journey of USET, the Gambia, and indeed, the African continent. *"This day marks not only the culmination of years of dedication, vision, and resili- ence but also the beginning of a new era in the technological and scientific advancement of our beloved nation"*, she stated.

The Vice Chancellor indicated that when the idea of establishing this University was conceived, it was with a bold ambition to build a center of excellence rooted in applied knowledge, innovation, and relevance to national development. *"Today, we commission the College of Science and Engineering, a cornerstone of that vision"*, she said. The VC is with the firm believe that this college will serve as a hub of creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving for generations to come.

Moreover, the Vice-Chancellor sees this state-of-the-art facility as a testament to the collective commitment of nurturing local talent, advancing scientific inquiry, and forging practical solutions to the challenges faced as a developing nation.

She further expressed her satisfaction to the fact that the first cohort of home-grown engineers, who have been trained, mentored, and shaped on the Gambian soil, are being graduated on this occasion. She regarded them as the embodiment of hope and the proof that with the right investment in education, lives can be transformed and capacity built from within.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked the Chancellor for his unrelenting efforts at all times. She equally thanked the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology for their unwavering support. She also appreciated the academic and administrative staff for their tireless efforts, and the Governing Council for their strategic leadership.

The Vice Chancellor also extended heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the President of Nigeria, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, through the Director General of Nigerian Technical Aids Corp (NTAC), who was unavoidably absent for sending eighteen NTACs volunteers to USET to offer help in the transformation agenda.

A Word to the Graduating Class

"As you step into the world beyond USET, remember that the value of your education lies not only in what you know but in how you apply it," the Vice-Chancellor opined. She urged them to lead with character, serve with compassion and innovate with purpose, and above all, be problem-solvers, not just job seekers. She asked them to remember that the journey of learning never ends.

She urged graduates to lead with integrity, apply their skills in solving societal challenges, and contribute to building a future where bridges, energy solutions, and infrastructure are designed and built by Gambians for Gambians.

This historic ceremony, which saw the graduation of the institution's first cohort of 28 engineering students, was presided over by President Adama Barrow. President Barrow was awarded an honorary Doctor of Engineering and Technology (Honoris Causa) degree by the University.

This degree recognized not just his tangible achievements but his enduring legacy of integrity, vision, and service- a true architect of national progress.

In his statement, President Barrow indicated that the occasion represents not only the overwhelming development of our tertiary education sector, but also a new chapter in our ambition to transform The Gambia into a knowledge-driven, technologically empowered, and self-reliant nation. He thanked the contractor for doing a great job, and stated that it is a great achievement for such a magnificent edifice to be built by a Gambian.

The Chairperson of the Governing Council, Mr. Ebrima Cham, welcomed the audience to the occasion. He hailed the Gambia government for the foresight and commitment in establishing USET, and the support the University continues to receive.

Degrees Conferred

In total, 1,850 graduates received degrees, diplomas, and certificates, including:

- CoSE: 8 Bachelor's Degrees in Mechanical Engineering, 5 in Civil Engineering, and 15 in Electrical and Electronics Engineering.
- IoT and IIE: Certificates, Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas in various technical and entrepreneurial disciplines. The event also featured the commissioning of USET's new Brikama Campus edifice, a modern academic hub that will further strengthen teaching, research and student life.

Commitment to the Future

Looking ahead, USET announced ambitious plans to:

- Launch a School of Postgraduate Studies
- Expand TVET partnerships with industries
- Develop new departments within the College of Science and Engineering.

Enhance campus facilities, including hostels, clinics, sports complexes, and student amenities.

We are building not just a university, but a national resource that will serve generations," she said.

The ceremony closed on a high note, with graduates leaving not only with qualifications but with a shared vision to drive innovation, uphold excellence, and contribute meaningfully to national and continental development.

USET's maiden convocation was more than a celebration; it was a statement of purpose, a promise of progress, and a proud reminder that The Gambia's future is in capable hands.








THE VICE-CHANCELLOR ATTENDS ACE @ 10 PROJECT IMPACT CELEBRATIONS IN ACCRA, GHANA

The Vice-Chancellor of the Gambia University of Applied Science, Engineering and Technology (USET), Prof. Nazmat Surajudeen-Bakinde, recently attended the ACE @ 10 Project Impact Celebrations, which took place at Labadi Beach Hotel in Accra, Ghana, from 7th to 9th April, 2025.

This milestone event marked a decade of achievements under the World Bank funded Africa Centres of Excellence for Development Impact (ACE Impact) initiative, coordinated by the Association of African Universities (AAU).

In an exclusive interview with USET Connect, Prof. Surajudeen-Bakinde shared insights on the significance of the project to USET and The Gambia as a whole, its achievements, and the University's future aspirations.

The ACE Impact Project and USET's Role Speaking on the project's importance, Prof. Surajudeen-Bakinde explained that ACE Impact is designed to strengthen higher education in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Entrepreneurship (STEE) through advanced training, research, and infrastructure development.

"Our case at USET is unique," she said. *"We are an emerging Centre of Excellence, starting from undergraduate studies and progressing towards Master's and PhD programmes. This project has provided us with crucial funding, infrastructure, teaching resources, and entrepreneurship support, transforming our capacity to serve The Gambia."*

USET's contribution includes staffing key positions such as a Project Manager, Centre Leader, and academic heads, alongside specialised officers for procurement, monitoring and evaluation, and safeguards. Partnerships with the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHERST) and the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) have further strengthened project delivery.

Achievements and Impact

The Vice-Chancellor highlighted visible progress, particularly at the Brikama Campus, where world-class infrastructure and state-of-the-art equipment are now in place.

"Our equipment rivals, and in some cases exceeds, what is available in much larger countries," she noted. "These resources support both research and income generation. For example, during Innovation Week, our students showcased impressive projects, proof of the practical skills and creativity we aim to cultivate."

Challenges and the Need for Sustainability

Despite significant progress, Prof. Nazmat Surajudeen-Bakinde acknowledged challenges, particularly the requirement for pre-financing and meeting Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs) within tight deadlines. She emphasised the importance of sustainability as the World Bank funding approaches its June 2025 conclusion. *"We must prepare to take ownership. That means training Gambian staff to replace external experts, retaining talented graduates, and building systems that endure beyond donor funding,"* she posited.

Networking and Collaboration

The workshop also provided opportunities to connect with leaders from 53 Centres of Excellence across Africa. To this effect, the Vice-Chancellor indicated thus: *"We discussed specific areas of collaboration, identifying Centres with strengths that complement ours so that we can work together for mutual benefits."*

Brikama Campus: The First of its Kind in the Region

USET's new Brikama Campus is being hailed as one of the most impressive in the ACE network. International visitors, including representatives from Senegal, praised its size and quality.

USET CELEBRATES INNOVATION WEEK, 2025 THEME: EMPOWERING INNOVATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A cross section of Panelists

The Gambia University of Applied Science, Engineering and Technology (USET) marked a milestone with the successful launch of its first-ever Innovation Week, held at the Kanifing Campus from 24th - 28th February 2025. It was organised by the Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IIE) in collaboration with the Centre for Science, Technology and Engineering for Entrepreneurship (STEE), the week-long event celebrated creativity, problem-solving, and entrepreneurial thinking under the theme “Empowering Innovation for Sustainable Development.”

The event brought together students, faculty, industry professionals, and stakeholders from diverse fields, transforming the campus into a hub of forward-thinking ideas and technological ingenuity.

Competitions, exhibitions, and live demonstrations provided students with a platform to showcase their talents from engineering designs and entrepreneurial concepts to cutting-edge business models addressing real-world challenges.

Celebrating the Champions of Innovation

A Vision for Global Impact

In her opening address, the Vice -Chancellor, Professor Nazmat Surajudeen-Bakinde commended the organisers for their commitment to fostering a culture of innovation, aligned with USET's mission and vision.

"Innovation Week is about breaking barriers and solving real problems," she said. *"If you want to create change, you must be ready to innovate; that is what engineering is all about. USET is not just a university for Gambians; we aim to be an international hub built on entrepreneurship, stewardship, integrity, and partnership,"* she stated.

Prof. Surajudeen-Bakinde emphasised that USET is positioning itself as a driver of transformation in The Gambia and beyond, inspiring students to pursue innovation as a pathway to societal advancement.

Insights from Experts

The week featured guest speakers and resource persons, including Dr. Ozioma Ikonne,Acting Director of USET's Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IIE) and Dr. Bintou Dibba, a Senior Lecturer at the University of the Gambia, along with other distinguished professionals in engineering and technology.

They shared valuable insights on research, innovation and translating academic knowledge into practical impact.

Encouraging resilience, creativity and curiosity, the speakers assured students of continued technical and entrepreneurial support to help bring their ideas to market. As Dr. Dibba remarked, "The knowledge shared here will not only inspire but shape a generation of innovators who will change their communities and the world."

Celebrating Student Achievements

The climax of Innovation Week was a dynamic project showcase, where seven student teams presented their innovations before a panel of judges and an enthusiastic audience.

- 1st Prize (D40,000): Electrically Powered Groundnut Roasting Machine, a modern, efficient upgrade to a traditional process.
- 2nd & 3rd Prizes (D30,000 each): Awarded to teams with high-impact technological solutions.
- 4th –7th Places (D5,000 each): Recognised for their creativity and potential for development.

In addition to monetary awards, organisers pledged to support teams in registering their startups with the Kanifing Municipal Council, encouraging participants to reinvest their winnings into building sustainable ventures.

A Springboard for the Future

USET Innovation Week 2025 was more than a competition; it was a launchpad for visionary ideas and a demonstration of the university's commitment to nurturing future leaders in science, engineering, and entrepreneurship.

As one speaker aptly concluded: "Innovation doesn't start in a lab; it starts in the mind of someone who dares to ask, 'What if?'" At USET, those daring questions are already shaping tomorrow's solutions.

USET VALIDATES POLICIES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

As part of the ongoing efforts to advance its transformation agenda, the Gambia University of Applied Science, Engineering and Technology (USET) convened a two-day Policy and Conditions of Service Validation Retreat from 24th - 25th April, 2025. The event

took place at the National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Authority (NAQAA) Conference Hall. It marked a significant milestone in strengthening USET's governance, operational efficiency and commitment to excellence.

The retreat brought together a wide range of stakeholders, including representatives from the USET Governing Council, University Management, Staff Welfare Association, Students' Union, Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MoHERST), NAQAA, the Personnel Management Office, the Ministry of Public Service, the Attorney General's Chambers, and the University of Education (formerly Gambia College).

Opening Ceremony: A Historic Step Forward

In his welcome remarks, Engr. Ebrima Cham, Chairman of the USET Governing Council, expressed appreciation to NAQAA's CEO for supporting the university and hosting the retreat. He noted that this was the first time in USET's history that formal policies had been developed, a crucial step toward strengthening institutional decision-making.

"These policies are essential references in guiding our operations," he said, adding that the validation process would help pave the way for The Gambia's vision of building a skilled and entrepreneurial citizenry.

Engr. Cham commended the Vice Chancellor for her leadership and expressed optimism that the policies would be successfully validated at the end of the two-day retreat.

Dr. Momodou Lamin Tarro, CEO of NAQAA, underscored the importance of well-defined policies in higher education institutions. "It is only in the university that you promote yourself; you either publish or perish," he remarked. *"Having the right policies and guidelines will not only set things in order, but will ensure they are done right."*

Prof. Nazmat Surajudeen-Bakinde, the Vice-Chancellor of USET, highlighted that the policies under review are the product of extensive preparatory work. She stated that from 6th - 9th December, 2024, some senior officials from USET held a Retreat at Sindola Hotel in Kanilai, to develop the initial draft. She said the University Senate later met on 30th January 2025 to deliberate on the documents before bringing them forward for validation.

"These policies are not just documents; they are a roadmap to achieving academic excellence, promoting research and innovation, and fostering a conducive learning environment," she stated. She outlined the core benefits of the policies as follows:

- Enhancing the quality of academic programmes and research outputs.
- Fostering a culture of innovation, entrepreneurship and community engagement.
- Promoting inclusivity, diversity and equity.
- Strengthening governance and ensuring accountability.
- Aligning with regulatory requirements and international best practices.

Government Perspective

The Permanent Secretary of MoHERST, Ambassador Jainaba Jagne, reaffirmed the government's commitment to USET's success, noting that the university is established to meet the nation's growing need for skilled manpower. She stressed that a university must be guided by relevant and effective policies to operate on a solid foundation. Declaring the retreat officially open, she commended USET's efforts in aligning its operational framework with national and sectoral priorities.

Collaborative Review and Validation

Following the opening session, participants engaged in detailed discussions, critiques, and recommendations on various policies presented by deans, directors, and heads of departments. Among the documents reviewed were:

- Conditions of Service Policy
- Governance and Leadership Policy
- Academic Policy
- Student Policy
- Intellectual Property Policy
- Research and Consultancy Policy

Closing Remarks

In her closing remarks, the Vice Chairperson of the USET Governing Council, Mrs. Isatou Dea Sawanneh expressed gratitude to all contributors for their dedication and input. She emphasized that the validation of these policy documents not only sets a solid foundation for good governance and staff welfare but also strengthens USET's vision, mission and core values.

The successful validation of the policies marks a pivotal moment in USET's institutional growth, ensuring that its operations are guided by clear, relevant,

and forward-looking frameworks designed to promote excellence in teaching, research and service.

USET AND ZHEJIANG FINANCIAL COLLEGE SIGN HISTORIC MOU TO STRENGTHEN HIGHER EDUCATION COOPERATION

In a landmark ceremony, the Gambia University of Applied Science, Engineering and Technology (USET) and Zhejiang Financial College (ZFC) of the People's Republic of China signed a Memorandum of Under- standing (MoU), marking a new chapter in international academic collaboration. The signing ceremony brought together distinguished leaders from both institutions, including Prof. Chen Rongda, Chancellor of ZFC, and Prof. Liu Yizhan, Director of the International Exchange and Cooperation Office and Dean of the School of International Exchange.

Representing USET, Vice-Chancellor Prof. Nazmat Surajudeen-Bakinde described the occasion as *"historic and joyful,"* underscoring the significance of the partnership in advancing higher education, research and innovation.

A Shared Commitment to Education and Innovation

In delivering her remarks, the USET Vice-Chancellor praised the openness of Chinese universities in embracing partnerships that promote international best practices.

She recognized Prof. Liu Yizhan for her tireless efforts and commitment in making the cooperation a reality.

The Vice-Chancellor noted that the collaboration would enable both institutions to leverage domestic and overseas resources, providing a platform to enhance skills, promote innovation and expand access to education on an international scale.

At the heart of the partnership lies USET's mission: "to nurture engineers, technologists, technicians, artisans and innovators with an entrepreneurial mindset". With this MoU, USET aims to consolidate its position as a Centre of Excellence in Science, Engineering, and Technology, while expanding international opportunities for students and faculty.

What the MoU Means

The agreement will open doors for a range of collaborative activities between the two institutions, including:

- Joint higher education initiatives
- Exchange of knowledge and best practices
- Staff and student development opportunities
- Cooperation in vocational education and computing
- Cross-cultural exchange in engineering and technology.

The Vice-Chancellor expressed confidence that the partnership will create lasting benefits for both countries:

> *"This cooperation will help build a platform for students and staff development, and international cooperation in not only higher education, but also in vocational education and computing. Rest assured that USET will uphold this partnership and work toward a stronger, sustainable relationship with ZFC for our mutual benefit,"* she declared.

Milestone in International Cooperation

The signing of this MoU symbolizes more than just institutional cooperation it represents a bridge between The Gambia and China in advancing education, innovation and entrepreneurship.

As the ceremony concluded, both parties reaffirmed their commitment to building a vibrant partnership that will empower students, drive research and inspire innovation well beyond national borders.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR LAUNCHES ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH, INNOVATION, AND DEVELOPMENT(ERID) CLUSTERS AT USET

As The Gambia's premier Science and Engineering university, USET is redefining what higher education means in Sub-Saharan Africa. With a clear mandate to advance Science, Technology, and Engineering Education for Entrepreneurship (STEEE), USET is spearheading a paradigm shift from the traditional idea of a university into what is called an Entrepreneurship University.

This forward-looking vision gave birth to the Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IIE), an ambitious arm of the university tasked with "building a national ecosystem of business and entrepreneurship education, while leveraging the vast benefits of existing and emerging technologies." By combining experiential learning with strong industry networks, IIE aims to nurture creative talent and turn fresh ideas into real-world ventures across key sectors of the economy.

The Birth of ERID Clusters

To advance this mission, the IIE, in collaboration with the Directorate of Research and Grants (DR&G), launched a bold initiative, Entrepreneurship Research, Innovation and Development (ERID) Clusters. These clusters bring together expertise across disciplines, bridging the gap between research and market-ready innovations.

On May 20, 2025, the Vice-Chancellor Prof. Nazmat Surajudeen-Bakinde officially inaugurated six pioneering clusters:

1. Civil Engineering & Construction Management – Affordable and green housing solutions

2. Mechanical Engineering & Mechatronics – Control and instrumentation systems

3. Electronics & Electro-mobility Solutions – Microelectronics, cybersecurity, digital identities, antenna technology and sustainable mobility
4. Energy Systems & Solutions – Renewable energy, energy storage, smart grids and fuel production

Leadership Perspectives

In her opening address, the Vice-Chancellor emphasized that the ERID clusters will serve as a catalyst for USET's transformation into a hub of innovation.

"Our goal is to create institutional support for an entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem that bridges the gap between pure and applied research," she remarked. She added that this will ensure the development of evidence-based innovations that are not only impactful but also globally competitive.

Dr. Ozioma Ikonne, the Acting Director of IIE, expressed gratitude to USET's Governing Council and management for championing the university's transformation. He indicated that the clusters are deliberately cross-disciplinary and designed to foster a national culture of innovation through strategic partnerships with industry, particularly in areas that align with The Gambia's development priorities.

A National Model for Innovation

With these initiatives, USET is positioning itself not just as a centre of learning, but as a national model for entrepreneurship-driven research and innovation. The creation of ERID clusters underscores a bold commitment: to prepare the next generation of innovators who will design resilient solutions for The Gambia, the region and beyond.

INSTITUTE OF INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP CONDUCTS ACADEMIC PRACTICE REVIEW WORKSHOP

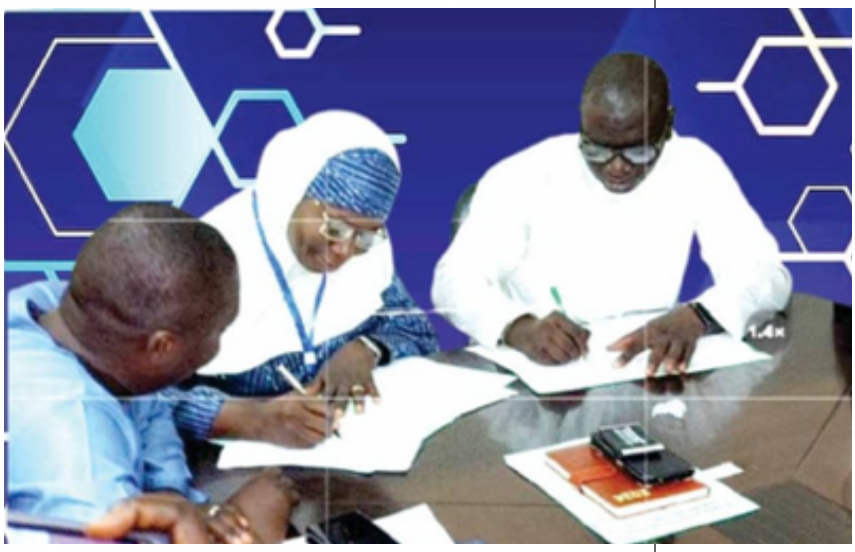
In alignment with its institutional mission and USET's performance contract objectives with the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MoHERST), the Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IIE) hosted a two-day Academic Practice Review Workshop from April 25 to 26, 2025.

Led by Dr. Ozioma Ikonne, Acting Director of IIE, the workshop aimed to renew student engagement practices and evaluate their impact on Student Learning Experience (SLE). Additionally, it provided refresher training on emerging pedagogical approaches within the fields of Engineering and Entrepreneurship education.

The workshop attracted over 20 staff members from various IIE units and introduced key concepts which include:

- Narratives of staff teaching and learning experiences
- Constructive alignment in the planning and delivery of engineering and entrepreneurship lessons
- Professional standards in teaching and learning in higher education. Participants expressed gratitude for the valuable insights gained during the workshop and called for more frequent sessions in order to continue to enhance teaching practices.

USET SIGNS A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT WITH AFRICELL



USET and Africell Seal Strategic Partnership to Boost STEM Careers

Over the years, the Gambia University of Applied Science, Engineering and Technology (USET) and Africell have enjoyed mutually beneficial relationship.

Now, as USET undergoes a historic transformation from a technical training institute into a fully-fledged Engineering and Entrepreneurial University, the partnership is entering a bold new chapter.

Africell, a leading telecommunications and data services provider in The Gambia and across the West and Central Africa sub-region, has long positioned itself as a champion of STEM education. With USET's renewed focus on applied science and engineering for entrepreneurship, the alignment between the two institutions has never been stronger.

A Graduate Traineeship Scheme for the Future

At the heart of this new phase is a two-year partnership agreement that introduces a graduate traineeship programme across multiple STEM disciplines.

Under the scheme, USET graduates will have the opportunity to gain practical industry experience in areas such as:

- Telecommunications Engineering
- Process Engineering
- Information Security
- Marketing, Statistics, and Business

Leaders Share Their Vision

Both institutions hailed the partnership as a timely and strategic move. Mr. Bai Sisse, Marketing Director at Africell, expressed excitement about deepening collaboration with USET to nurture the next generation of innovators in Africa's digital economy.

USET's Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Nazmat Surajudeen-Bakinde, echoed similar sentiments, noting that a partnership like this is crucial to building bridges between academia and industry.

She stated that: "this collaboration ensures our graduates are not only academically equipped but also industry-ready, capable of contributing meaningfully to the nation's technological and economic growth."

Strengthening Industry-Academia Linkages

The agreement is being coordinated by the Placement Unit of USET's Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IIE), which oversees industrial partnerships and student work placements. By institutionalizing such collaborations, USET is reaffirming its commitment to practical, entrepreneurship-driven education that equips students with skills for both employment and enterprise creation.

With this partnership, USET and Africell are not just strengthening their relationship, rather, they are shaping a model for how African universities and industry leaders can work hand in hand to drive STEM innovation and employment across the region.

TAF GLOBAL PARTNERS WITH USET FOR THE INAUGURAL CONVOCATION LECTURE SERIES

USET HOLDS AN INAUGURAL CONVOCATION LECTURE

The Gambia University of Applied Science, Engineering and Technology (USET) hosted its maiden Convocation Ceremony alongside the official commissioning of its state-of-the-art multi-million-dollar campus in Brikama. This historic event took place on June 21, 2025, and was presided over by the Chancellor, His Excellency, President Adama Barrow.

In keeping with convocation traditions and the university's commitment to strengthening partnerships with industry leaders, Mr. Mustapha Njie, CEO of TAF Global, was invited to deliver the keynote address as part of the inaugural Convocation Lecture.

The was done on June 19, 2025, at the Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara International Conference Centre in Bijilo, West Coast Region.

Mr. Njie, a renowned estate developer with extensive property portfolios across Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Uganda, The Gambia, Rwanda, and other African countries, addressed an audience comprising USET students, peers from other Gambian universities, youth entrepreneurs, academics, and representatives from civil society organizations. His lecture focus on the theme:

"Engineering Education for Entrepreneurship: Navigating Early Career Success in Construction and Civil Engineering."

This landmark occasion not only highlighted USET's philosophy of blending engineering education with entrepreneurial skills but also provided mentorship opportunities on the key factors for transitioning into and succeeding within the construction and civil engineering sectors.

The keynote speaker delivering his speech (L), (R)
Keynote Speaker with some members of USET governing council

In the run up to its inaugural convocation and the official commissioning of it main campus in Brikama,The Gambia University of Applied Science, Engineering and Technology (USET) held its first convocation lecture on 19th June 2025, featuring entrepreneur Mustapha Njie (TAF) as the keynote speaker.

The lecture, titled *"Resilience, Innovation and Legacy: A 50-Year Blueprint for Entrepreneurial Success in Construction and Real Estate,"* took place at the Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara International Conference Centre (SDKJICC) and was attended by over 1,200 people.

The lecture which was held as a prelude for the university's first convocation and the official commissioning of USET Brikama Campus attracted immense national interest.

A cross-section of participants at the convocation lecture

The topic of the lecture was chosen to highlight the transformative potential of local engineering education in the overall development plans of the Gambian government. The keynote speaker drew on his experience and personal life stories as a successful Gambian engineering entrepreneur to motivate young Gambians on emerging trends in engineering entrepreneurship trends in The Gambia's construction and its allied sectors.

'The establishment of USET at this time in this country signals a shift from the culture of expensive and exclusive foreign education to a culture of local abundance, inclusivity, and a determination for national resilience and development.', he said. Drawing on his own life story, Mr. Njie challenged USET students and all young Gambians to take advantage of the inclusive education opportunities which the establishment of USET has provided to learn to dream and aspire. He admonished the students to always aspire for engineering business novelty as such approach builds the foundation for sustainable entrepreneurial growth. However, Mr Njie further stated that the aspiration for greatness must be supported by a culture of integrity and effective leadership.

These are the main ingredients of a resilience entrepreneurial success. USET students and participants from other institutions described the event as a masterclass that needs to be organized at intervals that are more regular as an experiential complement to the engineering curriculum at USET.

USET HOLDS MATRICULATION CEREMONY FOR THE 2024/2025 ACADEMIC YEAR

The Gambia University of Applied Science, Engineering and Technology (USET) marked a historic milestone on April 16, 2025, when it held its first large-scale matriculation ceremony at the Kanifing Campus. The colourful event officially ushered thousands of new students into university life, offering them both a warm welcome and a solemn reminder of the academic journey that lies ahead.

Bringing together professors, staff, and students from all the three schools of the university, the ceremony stood as a defining moment in USET's transformation into The Gambia's premier hub for applied science, technical education, and innovation.

A Call to Excellence

Addressing the students, Vice-Chancellor Prof. Nazmat Surajudeen-Bakinde congratulated the new students on their hard-won admissions, describing them as fortunate to belong to an institution dedicated to innovation, applied research, and technical advancement both within The Gambia and across borders.

She urged them to embrace USET's mission of producing engineers, technicians, and entrepreneurs with a strong entrepreneurial focus.

She challenged the students to *"pursue excellence while upholding the values of integrity, service, curiosity, collaboration and resilience."* She implored them to work hard, remain committed, and make meaningful contributions to national development.

Taking the Matriculation Oath

The highlight of the event was the matriculation oath, delivered by the University Registrar. The oath formally bound the students to uphold USET's values and to respect the responsibilities that come with being part of the academic community.

Other dignitaries, including the Director of Finance of the University Governing Council and the Director of the Institute of Technology (IoT), also addressed the gathering. They congratulated the students and reminded them that discipline, focus, and perseverance are the key to achieving their dreams.

A Record Number of new Intake

This maiden matriculation ceremony marked a record enrolment of more than 2,500 students. The break- down included:

- 203 students from the College of Science and Engineering (CoSE)
- 314 students from the Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IIE)
- 2,044 students from the Institute of Technology (IoT)

The scale of the intake underscores USET's growing role as a national training ground for the next generation of scientists, engineers and entrepreneurs.

As the ceremony drew to a close, the message was clear: USET is more than a place of learning; it is a place of transformation. For the thousands of new students beginning their journey, matriculation day is not just about formality; it is the beginning of a commitment to excellence, innovation, and service to The Gambia and beyond.

MoHERST VALIDATES NATIONAL GENDER POLICY FOR TERTIARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

The Permanent Secretary, MoHERST, Ambassador Jainaba Jagne, delivering her speech during the validation ceremony

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MoHERST) has officially validated the National Gender Policy for Tertiary and Higher Education, reinforcing government's commitment to promoting equity, inclusion, and institutional accountability within The Gambia's higher education sector.

The policy, developed with the support of the Commonwealth of Learning (CoL), builds on earlier collaboration between the two institutions, which included the creation of a Gender Scorecard. Together, these initiatives aim to strengthen gender equity in higher education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) across The Gambia.

The validation exercise, conducted on June 25, 2025, engaged key stakeholders from public and private universities, tertiary institutions, government agencies, civil society organizations, and development partners. The process provided an opportunity for structured review, stakeholder input, and consensus-building to ensure that the policy is aligned with national priorities and international best practices.

The validated policy provides a comprehensive framework for advancing gender equality through gender-responsive governance, inclusive teaching and learning environments, prevention of gender-based violence and sexual harassment, equitable recruitment and promotion practices, and the mainstreaming of gender considerations in research and innovation.

The policy holds significant relevance for the University of Science, Engineering and Technology (USET), whose vision emphasizes the production of engineers, technicians, and innovators with an entrepreneurial mindset. By aligning institutional practices with the National Gender Policy, USET strengthens its position as a Centre of Excellence committed to inclusive access, participation, and success across its certificate, diploma, and degree programmes.

The policy further supports USET's mission by promoting equitable participation in science, engineering, and technology disciplines, thereby enabling the institution to harness diverse talent and contribute meaningfully to national development.

Following the validation, MoHERST will proceed with the formal adoption and implementation of the policy, supported by sensitization and capacity-building initiatives across tertiary and higher education institutions.

The validation of the National Gender Policy marks a significant milestone in the advancement of inclusive and sustainable higher education in The Gambia.

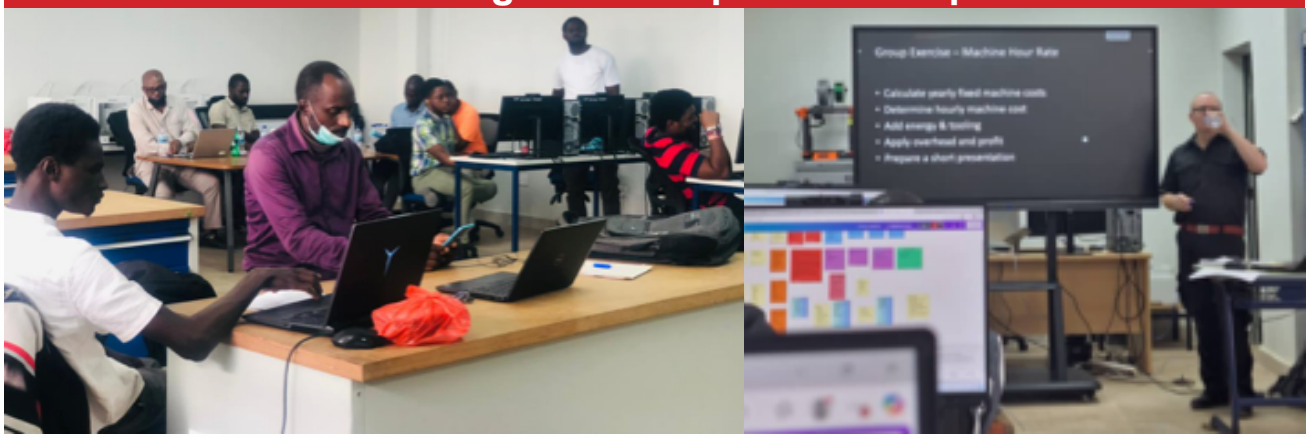
Speaking at the event, Permanent Secretary Ambassador Jainaba Jagne underscored the importance of the policy in bridging

long-standing gender gaps within higher education. She emphasised that inclusive education is not only a matter of equity but also a driver of national development.

This sentiment was echoed by Mrs. Kumba Jammeh, MoHERST's Gender Focal Person, who highlighted the critical role the policy will play in encouraging greater participation of girls in science, technology, engineering and technical fields. The validation of the policy marks a defining moment for The Gambia's higher education sector. By institutionalising gender equity, MoHERST has set the stage for universities and TVET institutions to transform access, participation, and leadership opportunities for women.

As the policy takes effect, it is expected to not only create more inclusive learning environments but also empower a new generation of women to lead in science, engineering, technology and beyond.

USET Strengthens Institutional Capacity in Advanced Manufacturing and Enterprise Development



In furtherance of The Gambia University of Applied Science, Engineering and Technology (USET)'s mandate to deliver applied STEM education, promote innovation, and support income generation, the University successfully implemented a staff capacity-building programme on Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machines and Entrepreneurship from 4th – 9th December, 2025.

The programme was designed to enhance staff technical proficiency while equipping participants with the entrepreneurial competencies required to translate technical expertise into sustainable, market-oriented income-generating activities.The training which was implemented with technical support from GIZ and aligns with USET's

strategic objective of strengthening industry-relevant skills, enhancing institutional capacity, and promoting self-reliance through technology-driven enterprise development. Twenty (20) technicians drawn from USET's technical workforce participated in the programme.

Dr. Ozioma Ikonne, Acting Director of the Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IIE), who coordinated the programme in collaboration with the College of Science and Engineering (CoSE), noted that the training represents the first phase of a structured four-batch capacity development programme that is scheduled for implementation between December 2025 and April 2026. He further indicated that the inception phase builds on prior training in the areas of CAD/CAM software and digital manufacturing workflows, to support staff with the capacity to develop viable business models in The Gambia's subtractive and additive manufacturing sectors.

Strategic Alignment with USET's Corporate Mission

Mr. Daniel Meyer, a German engineer and lead resource person for the programme, emphasized that the training is strategically aligned with USET's corporate mission to deliver practice-oriented STEM education supported by industry-responsive manufacturing skills and innovation-led enterprise models.

He highlighted the relevance of the programme in strengthening USET's role as a driver of skills development and industrial capacity within The Gambia's manufacturing ecosystem.

The programme adopted a structured delivery approach combining facilitated technical sessions, guided group work, case-based learning, and supervised hands-on practical exercises. The core thematic areas addressed included:

- Entrepreneurship and innovation fundamentals
- Market opportunity analysis in manufacturing and fabrication
- Business model development for CNC-based enterprises
- Costing, pricing, and financial management
- Quality assurance and customer satisfaction
- Marketing and client engagement strategies
- Small enterprise management in manufacturing contexts
- Legal, regulatory, and sustainability considerations.

Programme Outcomes and Institutional Impact

Commenting on the outcomes of the programme, Mr. Lamin David Jatta, a technician at the Entrepreneurship Hub and Innovation Lab (EHIL), underscored the strategic value of the training in advancing institutional capacity. He described the programme as a foundational step in a broader skills transfer and institutional sustainability framework. According to Mr. Jatta, the training enhanced participants' capacity to identify and assess market opportunities, develop CNC-driven enterprise models, and apply structured approaches to costing, pricing, financial planning, and customer engagement within the manufacturing sector.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR HOSTS PROFESSOR MOMODOU SALLAH, THE INAUGURAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED NATIONAL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FUND (NARIF)

The Vice-Chancellor welcomes Professor Sallah, the Executive Director of NARIF, to USET Brikama Campus(Photo Credit: USET-Connect)

As part of her ongoing engagement with partners and stakeholders, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nazmat Surajudeen Bakinde, and her Management Team on Tuesday, October 21 2025, received the newly appointed Executive Director of the National Research and Innovation Fund (NRIF) at her office in Brikama. In her opening remarks, the Vice-Chancellor introduced her team.

She gave a summary of the university's programmes that would require the immediate attention of NARIF when the Executive Director assumes office in December. The Vice-Chancellor highlighted the recent inauguration of Entrepreneurship Research, Innovation and Development (ERID) Clusters at USET.

These clusters include: Civil Engineering and Construction Management, Mechanical Engineering & Mechatronics, Electronics & Electromobility solutions, Energy systems, Agricultural technology and Agribusiness processes, and Entrepreneurial Marketing & Lean Start-ups in Integrated Regional Ecosystems. The Vice-Chancellor revealed that the ERID clusters are designed to provide a pipeline of evidence and information for product research, development and innovation in national development priority areas.

She expressed her delight at the timing of the establishment of the NARIF and the appointment of Professor Sallah, citing it as an opportunity that USET will fully explore in the pursuit of its entrepreneurship research, innovation, and development objectives.

Professor Momodu Sallah, the Executive Director of NARIF, with the Vice Chancellor's, and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic Affairs (Photo Credit: USET-Connect)

On his part, the executive director thanked the Vice-Chancellor and her team for welcoming him to USET's modern campus. He congratulated USET and the government of The Gambia for the successful completion

and inauguration of the Brikama campus. Professor Sallah revealed that NARIF was established as a tool to finance and promote research, innovation, and development across key sectors in the country. Overall, he said, the establishment of the NARIF

Photo session of the visit (Credit: USET-Connect)

is one of the objectives of The Gambia National Research Policy (2024 -2029) and the National Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy (NSTIP 2016 – 2025).

He added that NARIF is designed to strengthen The Gambia's research and innovation capacity by providing financial support to researchers, innovators, and small enterprises, to enhance job creation and sustainable development of The Gambia.

"My office will coordinate the day-to-day operations of the NARIF, provide strategic leadership to support post-secondary education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and research in science and technology", Professor Sallah added. While informing the USET team that he will resume in his role, effective, December 1, 2025, Professor Sallah, and his delegation, reflected on the potentials of NARIF to reposition The Gambia as a destination for high quality research and innovation through broad-based network of intra-regional ecosystems, donor mapping, and resource mobilisation activities that USET and other universities in The Gambia can benefit from.

In laying out his vision for NARIF, Professor Sallah indicated his resolve to build a world-class system of research and resource mobilisation that will unlock the research and innovation potential of Gambian universities. He identified USET as a brand that many institutions across the globe would like to be associated with."My office is willing to support in converting USET's institutional brand assets to tangible resources that will help consolidate current achievements while expanding the opportunities for a sustainable future for the university", Professor Sallah reassured.

In her response, the Vice-Chancellor hailed Professor Sallah as a key partner of USET and assured him of USET's readiness to collaborate closely with NARIF. She expressed her optimism and confidence in Professor Sallah's vision and the opportunities that the creation of NARIF would bring to USET and other Gambian universities and higher education institutions.

Other speakers, including the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs, the Acting Director of the Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, the Registrar, and the Director of Finance, echoed similar sentiments.

Feature Articles
Innovation Culture and a Pan-African Renaissance

Dr. Ozioma Ikonne

As the new millennium continues to unfold, it reveals a world marked by both unprecedented opportunity and profound uncertainty. On one hand, rapid advancements in information and communications technology are expanding the boundaries of human imagination. From innovation clusters in Palo Alto to mind labs across Scandinavia, breakthroughs in biotechnology, robotics, nanotechnology, and artificial intelligence are offering glimpses into a future defined by radical innovation.

On the other hand, global political and economic disruptions—including Brexit, shifting geopolitical priorities of major powers, the emergence of China and Russia as strategic competitors, volatile commodity prices, the activities of terrorist groups, and the ever-present threat of global pandemics—have heightened uncertainty in the global economy. Collectively, these dynamics have reshaped the matrix of global economic relations, prompting new national priorities and redefining the basis of international competitiveness.

The critical question that arises, therefore, is this: ***what do these global transformations imply for the future survival and competitiveness of nations—particularly in Africa?***

Emerging Global Innovation Trends: Lessons for Africa

While the question may sound rhetorical, it demands urgent and deliberate reflection. The emerging global order calls for a fundamental shift in thinking among policymakers, business leaders, and public sector actors. The world is undergoing a social and digital revolution one in which human labour is increasingly replaced by automation, big data and the Internet of Things redefine how societies function, and technologies such as bio-printing, self-driving vehicles, and smart systems transform daily life.

As governments, corporations, and civil society organisations prepare to deploy these innovations at scale over the next decade, Africa must confront a pressing concern: ***what will be its place in this emerging innovation-driven world?***

The reality of global competitiveness today is that developed nations—where radical product and process innovations are frequently conceived—have successfully leveraged the industrial economy to transition rapidly into knowledge economies. High-technology innovation now serves as a strategic defense, reinforcing their leadership positions across industries. Embedded national innovation cultures enable these countries to generate first-mover advantages, erecting formidable barriers against developing and aspiring economies.

This situation presents Africa with a stark choice. The continent may either maintain the status quo-characterised by governance

lethargy and limited innovation capacity and remain trapped in poverty and dependency, or it may chart a new course by developing a deep understanding of emerging global needs, technologies and knowledge systems.

The latter path requires governments to critically assess their nations' competitive positions by aligning development needs with available national resources—human capital, infrastructure, institutions, natural endowments, and financial capacity. From this assessment must emerge clearly defined competitive spaces within the global economy, supported by inclusive, organisational and technological innovation.

National Competitiveness and the Imperative for Action

National competitiveness is not accidental; it is strategically articulated. It involves the deliberate coordination of a nation's human and natural resources to generate sustainable social and economic value. Central to this process is a nationally embedded culture of learning and innovation that exploits areas of differential advantage.

Drawing from the theory of competitive relativity, innovation and global positioning depend on continuous learning, strategic assumptions, and anticipation of competitor behaviour. While Africa's infrastructural deficits pose significant logistical challenges, the cost of inaction is far greater. Global competitiveness has entered what may be described as a *"survival of the fittest"* stage where the fear of becoming obsolete is no longer theoretical but real for both corporations and nations.

The data is sobering. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for approximately 88 per cent of global malaria cases and 90 per cent of malaria-related deaths. Of the continent's 1.18 billion people, only about 40 per cent have access to electricity and just 20 per cent to the internet. With Africa's population projected to reach 2.4 billion by 2050, nearly six in ten people in Sub-Saharan Africa currently live in slums.

Agriculture—arguably Africa's greatest missed opportunity remains largely subsistence-based, resulting in the continent importing over US$16 billion more food than India, despite India's significantly larger population. Coupled with declining educational standards and higher education systems rooted in rote learning, the urgency for reform and innovation has never been greater.

The Way Forward

African governments must assume a more proactive role in shaping innovation ecosystems shifting innovation from its current state of randomness to a more deliberate, coordinated, and impact-driven process. This requires building strong linkages among stakeholders and establishing feedback loops that enable the identification, incubation, development, and funding of ideas and talent in areas of national strategic advantage.

Regardless of specific national priorities, it is essential to recognise the transformative power of technological innovation in driving productivity and economic growth. The experiences of countries such as Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore demonstrate the profound benefits of embedding technology-driven innovation at the core of national development strategies.

African governments must therefore be prepared to actively support innovation through enabling policies, institutional frameworks, and sustainable funding mechanisms. The alternative maintaining the status quo-risks continued economic dependence and the erosion of sovereignty in an increasingly competitive global system. The choice before Africa is clear. And the time to act is now.

Dr. Ozioma Ikonne is the Acting Director of the Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IIE) at USET. This article is adapted from an editorial originally published in **The Innovation Manager Magazine (TIMM).**

STEM EDUCATION IN THE GAMBIA: ADVANCING USET MISSION AND SHAPING THE NEXT GENERATION

Prof. Akinlabi Oyetunji

A New Era of Learning at USET

In an era defined by rapid technological change and global interdependence, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education stands at the heart of national progress. At The Gambia University of Applied Science, Engineering and Technology (USET), STEM is not simply a collection of academic disciplines—it is the foundation of the University's mission to deliver practice-oriented education that responds directly to national development needs. Therefore,STEM education at USET emphasises experiential learning, applied research, and industry relevance. By integrating theory with hands-on problem-solving, students are equipped with practical skills, critical thinking abilities, and innovative mindsets necessary to address real-world challenges in The Gambia and beyond.

Why STEM Is Central to The Gambia's Development Agenda

Globally, nations that prioritise STEM education have positioned themselves as hubs of innovation, productivity, and economic resilience. For The Gambia, STEM development aligns directly with national priorities such as industrialisation, food security, energy access, digital transformation, and youth employment. Hence, the following strategic enablers have been identified as therefore benefits of STEM education to the Gambia's National Development Plan (2023-2027):

Meeting National and Global Skills Demand

As the Gambia advances its development agenda, there is growing demand for skilled professionals in engineering, manufacturing, ICT, renewable energy, agriculture, and health sciences. USET's STEM programmes are designed to produce graduates who are industry-ready, adaptable, and capable of contributing immediately to both local industries and the global knowledge economy.

Building 21st-Century Competencies

USET's STEM-focused curriculum cultivates critical and creative thinking, digital literacy, data-driven decision-making, and spatial reasoning—competencies essential for modern governance, entrepreneurship and technological advancement. In a rapidly digitising world, these skills are central to national competitiveness.

Promoting Inclusive and Sustainable Development

STEM education also plays a critical role in promoting equity and inclusion. By encouraging early and sustained participation of women and underrepresented groups in STEM fields, USET contributes to narrowing gender gaps and fostering a more inclusive workforce—an essential component of sustainable national development.

STEM in Action: USET's Applied Approach

USET's approach to STEM education is anchored on application, relevance, and impact. Through laboratories, workshops, industry partnerships, and community-

based projects, students engage directly with challenges facing The Gambia, from agricultural productivity and climate resilience to infrastructure development and digital innovation.

Building Capacity from an Early Stage

While USET operates at the tertiary level, the University recognises the importance of early STEM exposure. Through outreach, partnerships, and advocacy, USET supports the strengthening of STEM education across the entire education pipeline—*helping to inspire interest, confidence, and preparedness among future university entrants.*

Advancing STEM Careers for National Transformation

A strong STEM foundation opens pathways to careers that are critical to The Gambia's transformation agenda, including software and systems engineering, renewable energy technologies, manufacturing, construction, environmental management, health technology, and applied research. These careers not only offer economic opportunity but also serve as drivers of national productivity, innovation, and self-reliance.
USET graduates are uniquely positioned to serve as engineers, technologists, researchers, entrepreneurs, and problem-solvers who are well positioned to lead Gambia's aspiration to transition from an agrarian economy to a knowledge-based economy where the advancement of technological innovation is a key success factor.

Conclusion

STEM education represents far more than academic advancement, it is a strategic pathway to national transformation. For The Gambia, building a resilient and innovation-driven economy depends on the deliberate development of scientific and technological capacity across all sectors. USET, as the nation's premier institution for applied science, engineering, and technology, occupies a pivotal role in this transformation. By aligning STEM education with industry needs, national priorities, and global best practices, USET is helping to cultivate a new generation of problem-solvers—graduates equipped not only with technical expertise but also with the creativity, ethical grounding, and adaptability required to drive sustainable development. Through applied research, innovation, and partnerships, the University continues to translate knowledge into practical solutions that address real challenges facing The Gambia.

As the country looks toward a future shaped by digitalisation, industrial growth, and inclusive development, sustained investment in STEM education remains essential. Therefore, this article serves as call to action for Gambians to embrace STEM education and leverage the opportunity provided by the establishment of USET to harness the development potentials of science, technology and engineering education for entrepreneurship t for economic resilience, social progress, and global competitiveness.

This will ensure that The Gambia is not mere a consumer of innovation, but a creator of it.
Prof. Akinlabi Oyetunji is a Professor of Metallurgical Engineering and Director of Research and Grants at The Gambia University of Applied Science, Engineering and Technology (USET).

News in Pictures

USET Vice-Chancellor with President Adama Barrow and Chairman of USTE governing council during a visit to USET's WASSU campus

USET VC(3rd right) with the Honourable minister MoHERST(4th left) and UNDP resident coordinator in The Gambia(centre) during the launching of the 2025 Human Development Report (HDR)

(L)The VC presides over the send-forth ceremony for Professor Samuel Ofori, who served as USET Consultant from 2022-2024).(R) The VC receives certificate of participation in Academic Programmes Management short course

The Gambia University of Applied Science, Engineering and Technology

USET

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