

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**PROCESS OPTIMIZATION AND
CHARACTERIZATION OF NANOSTRUCTURED
ZINC OXIDE THIN FILMS FOR SOLAR CELL
APPLICATIONS**

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of the requirements for the degree of
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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the result of my work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledged as referenced work. This thesis has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any other degree or qualification.

I, hereby, acknowledge that I have been supplied with the academic Rules and Regulations for Post Graduate, Universiti Teknologi MARA, regulating the conduct of my study and research.


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ABSTRACT

Recently, nanotechnology is employed in chemical synthesis of zinc oxide (ZnO) to produce novel nanostructured ZnO thin films. This new material synthesis technique could enhance the electrical and optical properties which can be applied for window layer application in solar cells. Although there are many chemically synthesis methods available, thermal chemical vapor deposition (CVD) method offers ZnO purity up to 99% and high quality films. However, to produce uniform and repeatable nanostructured ZnO thin film using double furnaces thermal CVD is very challenging and almost impossible. Therefore, a novel method using a gas blocker to synthesize ZnO nanowires was introduced in this thesis. As a result, uniform and repeatable nanostructured ZnO thin films were successfully deposited on ITO coated glass assisted with gold catalyst. The resulting crystallite size is around 32 nm and nanowire length around 5 μm . Since the electrical and optical properties of nanostructured ZnO are strongly dependent on the thin film's quality, the crystallinity of the thin films was enhanced by post annealing. Annealing the films at 550°C for 1 hour has produced optimum crystallinity in (0 0 2) crystal orientation. Another parameter which affects the structural and growth intensity is the carrier gas flow rate. It was found that using 0.75 L/min of gas flow rate had produced smoother nanostructured ZnO surface morphology and more growth on (0 0 2) plane. However, the transmittance in the visible region is only 65% with film thickness approximately 630 nm. This low transmittance is resulted from the gold catalyst which absorbs light at visible region. Therefore, ZnO seed layer was deposited and optimized to enhance the (0 0 2) crystal orientation and substitute the gold catalyst. As a result, catalyst-free nanostructured ZnO thin film was fabricated and the transmittance improved to more than 80%. However, the conductivity decreased to $1.82 \times 10^{-3} \text{ S.cm}^{-1}$. The fabrication of nanostructured ZnO-based heterojunction thin film solar cell was realized by depositing new p-type material ($\text{In}_x\text{Sn}_y\text{S}$ thin film) on nanostructured ZnO thin film using electrochemical deposition (ECD) method. A solar simulator was used to measure the current-voltage (I-V) characteristics of the solar cell using indium metal as the electrodes. It was obtained that the solar cell has energy conversion efficiency (η) of 0.041% with short circuit current density of $181 \mu\text{A.cm}^{-2}$ and open circuit voltage of 0.47 V. The field factor (F.F) of the solar cell is approximately 0.476, with maximum current density of 150 A.cm^{-2} and maximum voltage of 0.27 V. This finding proves that nanostructured ZnO thin film successfully functioned as a window layer. It also proved that nanostructured ZnO can be synthesized without using metal catalyst which degrades the optical properties of the thin films. However, further research should be undertaken especially to synthesize p-type materials which are more suitable with ZnO.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Overview on Solar Cell Technologies	1
1.2 Nanostructured Materials	3
1.3 Introduction to Nanostructured Zinc Oxide	5
1.4 Synthesis Technique	7
1.5 Problem Statement	10
1.6 Hypothesis	10
1.7 Research Objectives	10
1.8 Scopes of the Study	11
1.9 Organization of the Thesis	11
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 Chemical Vapor Deposition Integration	13
2.2 Nanostructured Zinc Oxide Synthesis	17
2.3 Thin Film ZnO-based Solar Cell Fabrication	20
2.4 Summary	21

CHAPTER THREE: SYNTHESIS METHOD AND PROPERTIES OF ZINC OXIDE

3.1	CVD System and Operation	23
3.1.1	Carbothermal Reduction	26
3.1.2	Crystal Growth in CVD	28
3.2	Sol-gel System and Operation	29
3.2.1	Surface Area and Surface Energy	31
3.2.2	Nucleation and Growth	34
3.3	Properties of Zinc Oxide	36
3.3.1	Crystal Arrangement	39
3.3.2	Energy Band Gap and Transmittance	40
3.3.3	Optical Properties	42
3.3.4	Electrical Properties of ZnO	45
3.3.5	Nanostructured ZnO	46
3.4	Summary	47

CHAPTER FOUR: FUNDAMENTAL OF SOLAR CELL AND FABRICATION TECHNIQUE

4.1	Fundamental of Solar Energy	48
4.1.1	Solar Radiation	48
4.1.2	Photon to Electrical Energy Conversion	49
4.1.3	Charge Transfer and Separation	51
4.1.4	Basic Solar Cell Performance	53
4.2	Solar Cell Fabrication Technique	55
4.3	Summary	59

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1	Introduction	60
5.2	Synthesis and optimization of NZO Thin Films by CVD Technique	62
5.2.1	Substrate Cleaning	64
5.2.2	Synthesis of NZO	64