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## The role of entrepreneurship education in shaping entrepreneurial action of disabled students in Nigeria

Reuel Johnmark Dakung<sup>a\*</sup>, Laura Orobia<sup>b</sup>, John C. Munene<sup>c</sup> and Waswa Balunywa<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Jos-Nigeria, Jos, Nigeria; <sup>b</sup>Department of Accounting and Finance, Makerere University Business School, Mbarara Regional Campus, Kampala, Uganda; <sup>c</sup>Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, Makerere University Business School, Kampala, Uganda; <sup>d</sup>Department of Entrepreneurship, Makerere University Business School, Kampala, Uganda

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This study adopted a cross sectional descriptive research design to examine the role of entrepreneurship education in shaping entrepreneurial action (EA) of disabled students of the Nigerian tertiary institutions. Also, an analytical survey with mixed methods and triangulation focus constituted the study's research design. A sample size of 286 disabled students was determined using Krejcie and Morgan sample size selection model. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, zero-order correlation and hierarchical regression. The findings revealed that pedagogy, course content and entrepreneurship education are significant predictors of EA. Entrepreneurship education that exposes students to life applicable issues is capable of boosting their confidence/capacity to risk into venture start-up. Second, the more lecturers' characteristics such as inspiring students, method of teaching, being approachable and displaying enthusiasm are applied in the teaching of entrepreneurship the better the EA of the students. This study indicates a number of implications for the tertiary institutions and policy-makers. Specifically, entrepreneurship education, pedagogy and course content make a significant contribution to EA for disabled students. This is a critical factor that tertiary institutions in Nigeria should consider in transmitting entrepreneurship knowledge to students. Policy-makers and other stakeholders need to develop keen interest in designing entrepreneurship curriculum to cater/accommodate the specific needs of students with disabilities.

**Originality/value:** This study is the first in Nigeria (Africa) to test empirically the relationship between pedagogy, course content, entrepreneurship education and EA among tertiary institutions' disabled students.

**Keywords:** course content; entrepreneurial action; entrepreneurship education; pedagogy

Cette étude a utilisé une méthode de recherche descriptive transversale pour examiner le rôle de la formation à l'entrepreneuriat dans la détermination de l'action entrepreneuriale chez les étudiants handicapés des institutions de l'enseignement supérieur nigérian. Son concept repose sur une enquête analytique basée sur plusieurs méthodes et sur un axe de triangulation. Un échantillon composé de 286 étudiants a été déterminé avec la table d'estimation de la taille de l'échantillon de Krejcie & Morgan. Les données ont été analysées en utilisant les statistiques descriptives, le coefficient de corrélation « d'ordre zéro » et la régression hiérarchique. Les résultats ont révélé que la pédagogie, le contenu des cours et la formation à l'entrepreneuriat sont des facteurs prédictifs significatifs de l'action entrepreneuriale. La formation à

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\*Corresponding author. Email: [reuidakung@yahoo.com](mailto:reuidakung@yahoo.com), [dakungr@unijos.edu.ng](mailto:dakungr@unijos.edu.ng)

l'entrepreneuriat qui expose les étudiants à des questions applicables à la vie réelle peut renforcer leur confiance et leur capacité de se risquer à démarrer une entreprise. Deuxièmement, plus l'application des caractéristiques des enseignants - capacité d'inspirer les étudiants, méthode d'enseignement, le fait d'être abordable et d'exprimer son enthousiasme – à la formation à l'entrepreneuriat sera importante, plus l'aventure entrepreneuriale des étudiants sera réussie. Cette étude souligne un certain nombre d'implications pour les institutions de l'enseignement supérieur et les décideurs politiques. Plus précisément, la formation à l'entrepreneuriat, la pédagogie et le contenu des cours contribuent fortement à l'aventure entrepreneuriale des étudiants handicapés. Il s'agit là d'un facteur critique que les institutions de l'enseignement supérieur du Nigéria doivent prendre en compte en transmettant des connaissances sur l'entrepreneuriat à des étudiants. Les décideurs politiques et les autres parties prenantes doivent susciter l'engouement des étudiants vivant avec un handicap en concevant un cursus pouvant répondre/s'adapter à leurs besoins.

**Mots-clés:** Contenu des cours; action entrepreneuriale; formation à l'entrepreneuriat; pédagogie

## 1. Introduction

In this study, we extend entrepreneurial action (EA) studies to persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Nigeria, a developing country. Specifically, we explore the role of entrepreneurship education (EE) as a trigger to EA. This is in view of the fact that the impact of entrepreneurship activities on job creation and economic growth of a country are seen to be widely recognized across the globe (Fitzsimons and O'Gorman 2014; Kritikos 2014; Valliere and Peterson 2009; Wong, Ho, and Autio 2005). This orientation seems to suggest that the needed wealth and employment creation is necessary because it will improve the quality of life of people. For instance, with the collapse of the last vestiges of the socialist economic system in 1991 and the global economic meltdown of 2008 which climaxed with disturbing job losses arising from the collapse of blue chip companies around the world, the whole world has embraced entrepreneurship (GUESSS 2011; Kritikos 2014; Mazanai and Fatoki 2012; Naude 2013; Popoola 2014; Valliere and Peterson 2009). Statistically in UK, entrepreneurship activities accounted for 99.3% of all private sector businesses at the start of 2015 and 99.9% were small or medium-sized (SMEs). Total employment in SMEs was 15.6 million; 60% of all private sector employment in the UK. The combined annual turnover of these ventures was £1.8 trillion (N513 trillion), 47% of all private sector turnover in the UK (Department for Business Innovation & Skills 2015).

Moreover, studies by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization in 2015 show that entrepreneurship has the propensity to drive the Nigerian economy and that there are currently over 17 million ventures employing over 31 million Nigerians. These account for over 80% of enterprises that employ about 75% of the Nigeria's total workforce. In addition, the 2014 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor has empirically identified Nigeria as one of the most entrepreneurial countries in the world. The study showed that 35 out of every 100 Nigerians (both normal and disabled) are engaged in some kind of entrepreneurial activity.

PWDs in Nigeria constitute about 24 million (14.1%) of the total population (Onwe 2015; WHO 2011). However, there are insufficient findings on the value of disabled entrepreneurs in the economic policy or studies in Nigeria. The scanty statistics on PWDs suggest that many are unemployed or at best underemployed. Scholars (Namatovu et al. 2012) have documented that the marginalization of these people in

relation to self-employment and entrepreneurship is extensive and theoretical development in understanding their engagement in entrepreneurial activities is still lacking. Giving this scenario, the Nigerian government initiated a number of programs through support agencies such as National Directorate for Employment (NDE) in 1987, National Poverty Eradication Programme in 2001, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) in 2003 and EE in 2006, to ignite the entrepreneurial spirit to further arrest the rising rate of unemployment. However, the evaluation of these programs in the area of addressing unemployment among the disabled youths confirms that the action plan was still lacking (Akhueonkhan et al. 2013; Dakung and Munene 2016; Egunsola, Dazala, and Daniel 2012; Emmanuel et al. 2012; Olayinka 2010; Yoloye 2008). This poses a concern on the role played by EE.

According to the British Council (2014), EE is crucial in developing entrepreneurial capacity. Schools, colleges and universities are legally required not to discriminate against PWDs by treating them less favorably than their counterparts without disabilities. Also, under the Equality Act 2010, all higher institutions of learning have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to their services (teaching of entrepreneurship), so that disabled students are not placed at a substantial disadvantage. Hence, the period 2007 became the watershed period for EE in Nigerian tertiary institutions of learning. It was taught as an interface with multiple disciplines and to that extent, each institution has caught the flame of entrepreneurship. In spite of the value of EE, EA among disabled graduates is low. One reason attributed to this is that these graduates only focus on looking for employment opportunities from the government and private sectors. This is in tandem to Duval-Couetil and Long (2015) who observed that there is lack of evidence of benefits of EE in Nigeria. This indicates that there is a gap between the government's expectation and the actual level of disabled graduates' involvement in entrepreneurship. In view of that, this paper recognizes the importance of EE in shaping the disabled students' EA.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: The next section discusses the theoretical background followed by literature review: EA, EE (pedagogy and course content) and hypotheses formulation. This is followed by a description of the approach employed to collect and analyze the data. Thereafter the results are presented. The last section comprises of discussions of findings, conclusions and implications.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

For investigating the role of EE in shaping the disabled students' EA, this study is anchored on action regulation theory.

### **2.1. Action regulation theory**

The theory proposes that the psychology of work should be concerned with actions, which are defined as goal-oriented behaviors. It provides a useful framework to examine the tasks (actions) by necessary focusing on certain mechanisms, e.g. goal intentions, action plans, action knowledge and self-efficacy (Frese and Zapf 1994; Hacker 1985). Anchoring on the theoretical framework of ART, we advance our argument that by providing appropriate EE to disabled students, it will enhance their entrepreneurial spirit for venture creation. The theory then offers clear and insightful explanations for entrepreneurship knowledge acquisition by disabled students that will lead to venture start-up. This is true giving the fact that the disabled students will appreciate the entrepreneurship program in enabling them to recognize business opportunities, develop business ideas as

well venture into viable business. This is in line with Gielnik et al. (2015) and Levie (1999) who opined that students will venture into business if they interact well in class and are taught the likely pitfall they are probable to face and the possible strategy to curb them. Similarly, Powell (2013) argued that exposing young people to entrepreneurship as an academic subject will enable them to develop a better understanding of entrepreneurship as well as make better decisions in choosing different paths of entrepreneurial career.

### **3. Literature review and hypotheses development**

#### ***3.1. Overview of entrepreneurship in Nigeria***

Entrepreneurship in Nigeria started when people produced more products than they needed, as such, they had to exchange these surpluses. Through this way, Nigerians in the olden days were engaged in entrepreneurship. Early entrepreneurship was characterized with production or manufacturing in which case the producer most often started with a small capital, most of it from his own savings. Early entrepreneurship started with trade by barter even before the advent of any form of money (Thaddeus 2012).

Modern entrepreneurship in Nigeria started with the coming of the colonial masters, who brought in their goods and made Nigerians their middle men. In this way, modern entrepreneurship was conceived. Most of the modern entrepreneurs were engaged in retail trade or sole proprietorship. One of the major factors that discouraged this flow of entrepreneurship development in Nigeria is the value system brought about by formal education. For many decades, formal education has been the preserve of the privilege. With formal education people had the opportunity of being employed in the civil service, because in those days the economy was large enough to absorb all Nigerians into the prestigious occupation. As such, the system made Nigerians to be dependent on the colonial masters.

Again the contrast between Nigerian and foreign entrepreneurs during the colonial era was very detrimental and the competitive business strategy of the foreign entrepreneurs was against moral standards established by society. For instance, the United African Company that was responsible for a substantial percentage of the import and export trade of Nigeria had the policy of dealing directly with producers and refused to make use of the services of Nigerian entrepreneurs. The refusal of the expatriates to utilize the services of local businessmen inhibited their expansion and acquisition of necessary skills and attitude. As a result, the flow of entrepreneurship in the country was slowed down. But, with more people being educated and the fact that government could no longer employ most school leavers, economic programs to encourage individuals to go into private business and be self-reliant were initiated by the Nigerian government (Nwachukwu 2012; Thaddeus 2012).

The role of government in entrepreneurship development in Nigeria became significant only after the Nigeria civil war (1967–1970). Around the mid-1980s, there has been an increased commitment of government to entrepreneurship development especially after the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Program in 1986. Added to this was the establishment of the NDE, National Open Apprenticeship Scheme and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) (Thaddeus 2012). Fundamentally, the Nigerian government promotes entrepreneurial culture through initiatives that build business confidence, positive attitude, pride in success, support/encouragement of new ideas, social responsibility, encouraging inter-firm linkages and promotion of research and development. In the early 2000s, entrepreneurship studies were introduced

into the Nigerian educational system especially in higher institutions as a mandatory course. The Centre for Entrepreneurship Development, which has the objective of teaching and encouraging students of higher institutions to acquire entrepreneurial skills, was established. The Centre's goal is to make the graduates self-employed, create job opportunities for others and to generate wealth (Nwachukwu 2012; Thaddeus 2012).

However, the case is different for PWDs since these programs in the area of igniting their EAs is still lacking for not being tailored to their specific needs. Although entrepreneurship has already been developed by some individuals with disabilities, yet still in a very limited scale. In general, they face disempowerment and economic exclusion (Viriri and Makurumidze 2014) and so their decision to venture into business is seen to be low. This assertion is confirmed by scholars who opined that just few PWDs in Nigeria are self-employed and many of them (about 60%) are seen to be unemployed because of discrimination and exclusion (Onwe 2015). PWDs seen in this regard are referred to as socially discriminated entrepreneurs (Blanck et al. 2000; Holub 2001; Mishra 2005; Pagan 2009; Schur 2003).

### **3.2. Concept of entrepreneurial action**

EA could mean set activities and tasks entrepreneurs engage in when establishing a business or the act of becoming an entrepreneur (Trevelyan 2009; Carter, Gartner, and Reynolds 1996; Begley and Boyd 1987). It is a set of decisions about which opportunity to pursue, how to raise funds, what legal organizational form to take, where to obtain further information and support, who to employ on the start-up team, and so on. Although the term is used interchangeably with behavior (Kautonen, Down, and Minniti 2013), in this study we will refer to EA rather than behavior due to the central role of action in entrepreneurship. Action is important because starting a new business requires continuous actions to gather resources and to set-up viable business structures and entrepreneurs who initiate more start-up activities processes are more likely to successfully launch a business (Gielnik et al. 2015; Kessler and Frank 2009; Lichtenstein, Dooley, and Lumpkin 2006). Action principles facilitate taking action to accomplish tasks because they provide specific knowledge of what to do and how to do something. It is also pertinent to note that action principles are not only derived from individual experiences but also from theory and scientific evidence about how to be successful in entrepreneurship (Frese and Zapf 1994; Gielnik et al. 2015). By implication the role of actions could be as straightforward in new venture creation as it is in other research domains.

EA for PWDs is significant from different policy perspective lenses, promoting entrepreneurship among disadvantaged groups, narrowing the gap in employment rates between disabled people from the rest of the population and preventing social exclusion (Thurik and Wennekers 2005; Viriri and Makurumidze 2014). It has been documented that people with disabilities make natural entrepreneurs since having a disability can also be a stimulus for independent problem-solving and innovation. This is seen in developed world like the UK and USA where PWDs have a higher rate of self-employment than people without disabilities (Dakung and Munene 2016; Harper and Momm 1989; Kitching 2014; Pagan 2009). The argument then follows that people who are in some way excluded from society often develop the initiative of starting their own enterprise. The successful enterprise often serves as an avenue for instituting confidence and satisfaction in the person. Hence, EA should be utilized more frequently to help PWDs move from unemployment, underemployment and welfare-based income to gainful employment and self-sufficiency (Blanck et al. 2000; Burchardt 2003; Harper and Momm 1989).

Furthermore, it is argued that PWDs especially in Nigeria are largely invisible, ignored and excluded from mainstream development. This is reflected in the areas of disempowerment and economic exclusion. No matter where they live, they are statistically more likely to be unemployed and underemployed due to lack of access to developed support connections and social capital than their able bodied counterparts (Blanck et al. 2000; Cooney 2008; Harper and Momm 1989). This is supported by the submission of scholars (Dakung and Munene 2016) who opined that for the fact that PWDs in Nigeria are stigmatized, discriminated and marginalized in every facet of life their EA is seen to be low. Also, there are insufficient findings (statistics) on the value of disabled entrepreneurs in the economic policy or studies in Nigeria suggesting that many are unemployed or at best underemployed.

### ***3.3. Concept of entrepreneurship education***

EE refers to the scope of curricular, lectures or courses that provides students with entrepreneurial competencies, skills and knowledge in pursuing entrepreneurial career (Van Clouse 1990; Fayolle, Gailly, and Lassas-Clerc 2006; Ekpoh and Edet 2011; Ooi, Selvarajah, and Meyer 2011). It is one area that champions the principle of inclusivity, integration and mainstreaming and has become a serious matter for school administrators, course developers, government (public) servants, and researchers (Kuratko 2005). One reason for the increasing interest in EE is the impact of entrepreneurship on economic growth and employment (Audretsch, Grilo, and Thurik 2011). Evidence is emerging that increasing the number of young people and high-caliber graduates across the globe are expressing a preference for starting their own businesses and becoming entrepreneurs rather than being employees of large corporations (Kelley et al. 2011b). Emphasis on EE has been proposed, recognized and touted as a way to drive development and sustainability of economies around the world (Neck, Greene, and Brush 2014). Concurrent with this trend, the demand for EE at various academic levels has also increased steadily. One of the key purposes is to give students a thorough understanding of business start-up and teach subjects such as business strategy, marketing, key management skills and purchasing (Heinonen and Poikkijoki 2006; Solomon 2007).

Entrepreneurial training and educational services for learners with disabilities seem very important in the area of self-employment and market development (Gnyawali and Fogel 1994; Viriri and Makurumidze 2014). One of the environmental factors that have contributed to the entrepreneur success is an educational and short-term training program. To enhance their EA the disabled learners need customized training in terms of business plan preparation, strategic planning, decision-making, negotiation, pricing, market penetration, organization and management of the workforce and handling of cash-flow among other issues (Viriri and Makurumidze 2014; Swanson and Webster 1992). Concurring to their assertion, Powell (2013) pointed out that guest lectures be provided by entrepreneurs and professionals (in our case successful disabled entrepreneurs) for the students. These experienced and knowledgeable guest speakers could offer realistic feedback to these students as well as share their experiences to them. He also maintained that entrepreneurship educators should play a role as a coach rather than a supervisor, so that the students could develop more realistic understandings of their abilities, pursue the applied knowledge particularly useful to them, and learn to adapt rather than blindly imitate examples. This amplifies the importance of embracing and implementing pedagogical content knowledge (as discussed in the succeeding sections) in teaching and learning especially in EE.

### **3.4. Pedagogy and entrepreneurial action**

The delivery of EE depends on its objective. Common pedagogies such as lecturing and writing a business plan, which are more teacher-centered, remain more frequently used in EE (McKeown et al. 2006). Some instructors and lecturers of entrepreneurship have started to adopt active pedagogies such as role playing, management simulations, team projects and participative discussion sessions to stimulate students' entrepreneurial behavior (Birdthistle et al. 2007; Pittaway and Cope 2007; Jennings 2002). It is even argued that the best teaching methods for entrepreneurial learning should be learner-centered, using active-application and active experimentation approaches rather than teacher-centered approaches, so that students can acquire real-life experiences and develop techniques of reflective observation and abstract conceptualization during the enterprising learning process (Garavan and O'Conneide 1994; Hytti and O'Gorman 2004; Hegarty 2006; Birdthistle et al. 2007). Based on that, action learning has been viewed as one of the most effective tools for enhancing the effectiveness of any entrepreneurial development programs for developing entrepreneurial skills, knowledge and attitude of learners (Pittaway and Cope 2007; Jones and English 2004; Jones-Evans and Williams 2000). Focusing on the disabled learners, there is need for little initiative by the lecturers in teaching EE. Therefore, mentioning specific objects/items to attract the learners' attention is key in enhancing their EA. Also, making provision for instructional materials and recorded lectures of EE (for the blind and partially blind students), providing sign language interpretation or information in accessible formats as well as involving them fully during lectures will give them practical and clearer picture of business start-up. Depending on the context, the outcomes of the portfolio of the various teaching methods employed in learning entrepreneurship will enhance students' (in our case disabled) EA (Clarke et al. 2006). Therefore, we postulate the following hypothesis.

**H1:** Pedagogy is positively related to EA of the disabled students.

### **3.5. Course content and entrepreneurial action**

The purpose of developing entrepreneurial course content is to stimulate entrepreneurship awareness among students that would increase their interest in entrepreneurship. Therefore, entrepreneurial course contents are key factors in developing and fostering their entrepreneurialism (Charney and Libecap 2003; Hannon 2005). Scholars (Edwards and Muir 2005) express their views on the fact that entrepreneurial course contents are developed differently across institutions of learning either as an optional module within business courses or specific courses on entrepreneurship. These raise awareness by providing opportunities for students to learn from real life practical experiences that makes them think of entrepreneurship as a career (Hynes, Costin, and Birdthistle 2011; Kirby 2004). Courses for entrepreneurship (i.e. course content) influence students' capacity to deal with real entrepreneurial activity. To further enhance the EA of the disabled students, the course content should be customized to fit their specific characteristics (see Table 1).

Additionally, the core structure of teaching entrepreneurship courses should draw on critical thinking, reliance on experience, business-general knowledge, thinking about entrepreneurship as a career, opportunity-specific knowledge, use guest speakers who are experienced entrepreneurs (Brown 1999; Vesper 2004). This points to the fact that specialized courses in entrepreneurship will motivate and give students (in our case disabled) the confidence of starting new businesses (Delmar and Davidson 2000). This leads to the following hypothesis.

**H2:** Course content is positively related to EA of the disabled students.



Table 1. Sample of a customized EE course content for the disabled students.

Module	Module content/objectives
Entrepreneurship as a career for the disabled person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usefulness of entrepreneurial qualities for self-employment.</li> <li>• Identify career paths that can help a disabled person develop entrepreneurial skills and characteristics.</li> <li>• Advantages and disadvantages of self-employment.</li> <li>• Disabled students are to assess their personal potentials of becoming entrepreneurs.</li> <li>• Contact and develop relationships with disability organizations that promote advocacy and empowerment for career choice such as Centers for Independent Living.</li> <li>• Provide information about entrepreneurs in a variety of careers, within the community, or famous entrepreneurs with disabilities.</li> </ul>
Stigmatization and entrepreneurship	Understand the concept of stigmatization, success stories of disabled entrepreneurs, how to deal with stigmatization in the world of business.
Sharing experiences	Invite/engage successful disabled entrepreneurs to share their practical experiences.

Note: Materials to be used for the EE be brought to class (physically available). Ensure that working materials are made available to disabled students and personalized to enable them feel the content, context and texture. E.g. ramps and sign language interpretation or information in accessible formats.

Second, in the curriculum, terms/phrases such as 'Ability in disability'; 'working with whatever is available'; 'possibility in impossibility'; 'solution where problems arise'; and 'no one is useless to themselves' be used to encourage the students.

Source: Adapted from Thurlow, House, Boys, Scott, and Ysseldyke (2000) and Kaufmann and Stuart (2007).

### ***3.6. Entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial action***

EE has increased significantly in most industrialized countries by providing courses related to curricula. Basically, it is a process that provides entrepreneurial competencies and confidence to learners in order to venture into business (Oosterbeek, van Praag and Ijsselstein 2010). Research has been extensively focused on the field of EE with exponential growth level internationally. This is evident from the strands of studies which have been conducted on the ability of entrepreneurship to create new jobs and the importance of EE in producing potential entrepreneurs (Hill, Ó'Cinnéide, and Kiesner 2003; Kourilsky 1995; Kuratko 2005; Raichaudhuri 2005; Venkatachalam and Waqif 2005). For example, Volery and Mueller (2006) highlight the role of EE in influencing an individual's decision to become an entrepreneur. Participation in EE in this regard has been associated with the increasing interest towards choosing entrepreneurship as a viable career option (Gorman, Hanlon, and King 1997). To this end, universities and other institutions of higher learning have been given the mandate to play a leading role in inculcating students with the entrepreneurial knowledge and skills that will be useful in their future career endeavors (Nurmi and Paasio 2007; Omede 2016). EE has been recognized as one of the vital determinants that could influence students' career decisions (Kolvereid and Moen 1997; Peterman and Kennedy 2003). Due to that influence, there is a need to examine how EE could influence disabled students' propensity to entrepreneurship. Drawing from the empirical studies, we hence hypothesized as thus:

**H3:** EE is positively related to EA of the disabled students.

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1. Research design**

This study adopted a cross sectional descriptive research design to examine the role of EE in shaping EA of disabled students of the Nigerian tertiary institutions. Also, an analytical survey with a mixed methods and triangulation focus constituted the study's research design (Collis and Hussey 2009). The study is dominated by quantitative method, supported by qualitative method. The qualitative method which involved conducting interviews (with disabled students) was to help illuminate complex concepts and relationships unlikely to be captured by predetermined response categories or the standardized measures. To answer the research hypotheses generated in the literature review section, we undertook a comprehensive survey covering a random sample of disabled students from three (3) tertiary institutions (Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education) at the end of session after taking entrepreneurship course in Plateau State Nigeria. The institutions in this state were chosen because of the concentration of PWDs pursuing their studies.

### **4.2. Population, sample size and sampling procedure**

The study population consisted of 1106 drawn from Universities (632), Polytechnics (278) and Colleges of Education (196) where a sample size of 286 was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size selection model. This study utilized a stratified random sampling technique, in which individual participants (disabled students) were randomly drawn from a stratum (universities, polytechnics and colleges). Simple random sampling was then be used to select the disabled students in each stratum. To obtain responses from the respondents (i.e. the disabled students), lecturers were contacted who then identified them to answer the questionnaires. This technique was employed to ensure that appropriate elements were drawn from all institutions of the population to reduce sampling error and simultaneously maximize representativeness (Amin 2005; Field 2005; Field 2009).

For those with sight impairment, we read out the questionnaires to them, while the other category filled the questionnaires issued out to them. The researcher thereafter collected some of the questionnaires directly from them, while others were retrieved through their lecturers and class representatives. Also, the data were collected at a single point in time as opposed to a longitudinal study, which deals with the same sample units of population over a period of time. Out of the targeted sample size of 285, 278 co-operated and responded to the face to face administered questionnaire. The high response rate (97%) is attributed to fact that a personal approach was employed in collecting data. This approach was chosen to enable a face to face interaction between the researcher and the respondents, and to improve the quality and response rate. More so, the researcher maintained useful contacts with the lecturers and class representatives, who were instrumental in identifying the relevant sampled respondents and maintaining good relationships with them, which yielded excellent response rates.

The sample characteristics reveals that males were more (190) than females (76), with the majority belonging to the 21–26 age bracket ( $M = 71.4\%$ ;  $F = 28.6\%$ ). With regards to the disability category, majority (48.6%) of the respondents was crippled and 59.1% of them acquired their disabilities later in life. Finally, majority of the respondents (89.6%) were single.

### 4.3. Operationalization and measurement of variables

The independent variable for this study is entrepreneurial education, while the dependent variable is EA. These variables were all measured using item scales developed by previous scholars drawn from existing literature. Some modifications were made where necessary to suit the study context (Nigeria). This is expounded as follows:

*EE* was conceptualized as the provision of knowledge, skills and motivation to students to encourage entrepreneurial success in them, and measured in terms of pedagogy and course content. Specifically, these two dimensions are measured as follows.

- *Pedagogy* was measured by examining the method and practice of teaching, especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept relating to entrepreneurship. The Variable was measured using Lanero et al. 2011 selected item. The items were modified and anchored on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree). We utilized such items as ‘Lecturers have influenced my ability to develop business networks’, ‘My lecturers enhance my skills to handle an entrepreneurship project’, ‘I experienced action-based entrepreneurship training from the lectures’, ‘Views of the lecturers inspire my entrepreneurial mind’ and ‘Students are engaged in the start-up process of a real business during lectures’. The expectation on the respondents was to indicate their experience(s) with regards to the prescribed pedagogy.
- *Course Content* was measured by looking at the choice of topics, description, the organization and sequencing of course curriculum. Here the emphasis is that the choice of topics and their organization should always support the learning objectives for the course (in our case entrepreneurship). We utilized and adapted measures based on those previously employed by Lanero et al. (2011) to suit the setting in Nigeria. Examples of the items are ‘The syllabus emphasizes EAs in business start-up’, ‘The course increases my understanding of the attitudes of entrepreneurs’, ‘Entrepreneurship course enhances my ability to identify business opportunities’, ‘The course places emphasis on how students can develop business plan’, ‘The syllabus is about the best method to train EA’ and ‘The course places emphasis on how students can take business risk’. Respondents were required to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement, with prescribed items anchored on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree).

*EA* was conceptualized as discrete activities involved by an individual to start-up a business. In this regard, it was measured using both the pre-start up and actual activities related to business (Gielnik et. al. 2015; Linan and Chan 2009). The variable was anchored on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = not at all effort to 6 = very much effort.

### 4.4. Control variables

Since previous studies have indicated that men are more likely to develop the intention to start a business venture than women (Kolvereid and Moen 1997), we controlled for gender. Also, age was controlled for because it has been related both to intentions (Morris and Venkatesh 2000) and entrepreneurial behavior (Bosma et al. 2012; Chlosta et al. 2012; Reynolds 1987).

Table 2. Correlations.

Variable	1	2	3
Pedagogy (1)	1.00		
Course content (1)	.334**	1.00	
EA (3)	.481**	.159**	1.00

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed).

#### 4.5. Data analysis

Data was cleaned, followed by parametric assumptions diagnostic tests. The results revealed that the parametric assumptions were met. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the sample characteristics. Zero-order correlations between the dependent variables and the independent variables are presented in Table 2. While a hierarchical regression analysis was performed to ascertain the contribution of the predictor variables (pedagogy, course content and EE) in explaining the variations in EA.

#### 4.6. Data quality control

After retrieving the questionnaires from the respondents, we sorted them to identify the usable ones. Out of the 285 questionnaires administered to the respondents, 266 usable ones were returned. The returned hand delivery questionnaires were serialized from 1 to 266 on top each questionnaire before entering our data in to SPSS software. Similarly questionnaires with a substantial number of items (for example 25%) left unanswered were discarded, for a question with only two or three items left black. An exploratory assessment was then performed to test reliability and validity of the data (Anderson and Gerbing 1988).

#### 4.7. Reliability

Cronbach's alpha was used in order to verify reliability. The Cronbach's alpha values for pedagogy, course content and EA range 0.78, 0.82 and 0.92, respectively. These are above the threshold of .70 by Nunnally (1978).

### 5. Results

**Correlations:** Table 2 presents a zero-order correlations results showing the relationships between the study variables.

The results in Table 2 above show that there is a positive and significant relationship between pedagogy and EA ( $r = .481, p < .05$ ), which implies that changes in pedagogy are associated with positive changes in EA of disabled students. The results also show that there is a positive and significant relationship between course content and EA of disabled students ( $r = .159, p < .05$ ).

Table 3. Hierarchical regression analysis with EA as the dependent variable.

Variable	Mode 1 B	S.E.	Mode 2 B	S.E.	Mode 3 B	S.E.
Constant	5.506**	.112	2.798**	.245	1.874**	.197
Gender	.034	.072	.006	.058	-.023	.043
Age	-.079	.048	-.067	.039	-.059	.029
Pedagogy			.548**	.046	.072	.048
Course Content					.625**	.044
<i>R</i>	.102		.602		.799	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.010		.363		.638	
Adj. <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.003		.355		.633	
<i>R</i> square change			.352		.275	
<i>F</i> change			144.886		198.702	
Sig. <i>F</i> change			.000		.000	

Note: Dependent variable – EA;  $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

### 5.1. Regression analysis

A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to determine the contribution effects of pedagogy and course content on EA of disabled students. The results are presented in Table 3.

The following regression equations define the models in the table.

$$\text{Model 1: EA} = \beta_0 + \beta_1G + \beta_2A + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{Model 2: EA} = \beta_0 + \beta_1G + \beta_2A + \beta_3PDG + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{Model 3: EA} = \beta_0 + \beta_1G + \beta_2A + \beta_3PDG + \beta_4CC + \varepsilon$$

where: EA = is the entrepreneurial action,

$\beta_0$  = is a constant,

$\beta_1G$  = is the unstandardized *B* coefficient of gender,

$\beta_2A$  = is the unstandardized *B* coefficient of age,

$\beta_3PDG$  = is the unstandardized *B* coefficient of pedagogy,

$\beta_4CC$  = is the unstandardized *B* coefficient of course content,

$\varepsilon$  = is the error term.

The results in Table 3 indicate that in Model 1, the control variables (gender and age) have an insignificant explanatory power of 1%. This implies that the influence of gender and age on EA of disabled students is negligible. Model 2 shows that the introduction of pedagogy to the equation, accounts for an extra 36% of the variance explained by the model. The model also reveals a statistically significant relationship between pedagogy and EA ( $f\Delta = 144.886$ ;  $p < .001$ ). The addition of course content in Model 3, reveals an extra 27.5% of variability in EA ( $f\Delta = 198.702$ ,  $p < .001$ ). More so, there is a positive and significant relationship between course content and EA. The results of the analysis demonstrate that the role of both pedagogy and course content (being the measures of EE) are significant independent variables. Therefore, the Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 2 and

Hypothesis 3 were supported. Lastly, the variables entered in the regression model explain an overall of 63.8% of the variance in EA.

## **6. Discussion**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the role of EE in shaping EA of disabled students. This study provides empirical evidence indicating that such factors as gender and age are inconsequential in determining the likelihood of disabled students to venture into business. The result on gender and age is not surprising because in Nigeria, there are circumstances where venturing into business does not really depend on one's age or gender. For instance, most young Igbo ladies in the eastern part of the country are seen to be more entrepreneurially inclined than the male counterparts in the middle belt of the country. This is contrary to the findings of some scholars (Bosma et al. 2012; Chlosta et al. 2012; Kolvereid and Moen 1997; Reynolds 1987). A plausible explanation for the finding on the role of gender and age is the fact that they are not action oriented. As a result, the gender and age of an individual is considered to a great extent theoretic and less relevant for EA.

We posited a relationship between EA, pedagogy and course content variables. In addition, we hypothesized that there is a significant relationship between EE and EA. In general, the results of the analysis provide empirical supports for the position played by EE in promoting entrepreneurship among disabled students (Hill, O'Conneide, and Kiesner 2003; Kourilsky 1995; Kuratko 2005; Raichaudhuri 2005; Venkatachalam and Waqif 2005; Volery and Mueller 2006). In line with that, the endeavor of Nigerian entrepreneurial culture is recently seen to be attracting attention towards pedagogical content knowledge. This reflects the current focus on the importance of entrepreneurship's pedagogical content knowledge in improving teaching and learning process within the EE thus increasing the students' EA.

Furthermore, the result on Hypothesis 1 implies that pedagogy and EA are closely associated. This is true because an entrepreneurship learning environment characterized by good lecturer qualities, student-centered teaching method (using active-application and active experimentation approaches) will enhance learning. This is in agreement with some scholars (Birdthistle et al. 2007; Garavan and O'Conneide 1994; Hegarty 2006; Hytti and O'Gorman 2004) who argue that teachers have influence on students in acquiring real-life experiences and developing techniques of reflective observation and abstract conceptualization during the enterprising learning process. By implication, lecturers should employ portfolio of the various teaching methods in teaching entrepreneurship to disabled students in order to enhance their EA.

The results on Hypothesis 2 suggest that course content and EA are positively correlated. This provides empirical evidence indicating that well-designed entrepreneurship course content will enhance disabled students' EA. The finding means that when EE course content is designed/developed in a manner that is tailored towards the specific needs of disabled students, it will better raise their awareness by providing opportunities for them to learn from real life practical experiences and think of entrepreneurship as a career. The study finding is in agreement with Vesper (2004) and Brown (1999) who observed that to further enhance the EA of students, the course content should place more emphasis on hands-on teaching methods. Additionally, the core structure of teaching entrepreneurship courses should draw on critical thinking, reliance on experience, business-general knowledge, thinking about entrepreneurship as a career, opportunity-specific knowledge, use guest speakers who are experienced entrepreneurs.

Finally, the results of Hypothesis 3 revealed that EE is positively related to EA. This indicates that positive changes in EE are associated with positive changes in EA. This is

factual in the sense that EE that exposes disabled students to life applicable issues relate to boosting their confidence/capacity to risk into venture start-up. This also suggests that the decision to start a business by disabled students of Nigerian tertiary institutions could be attributed to the creative atmosphere in the class as well as the emphasis being placed in the course content (in the areas of identifying business opportunities, sourcing for funds and connecting with business experts) that inspire their entrepreneurial mind. This relationship may also be attributable to the increasing demands from disabled students to seek for quality EE from tertiary institutions of learning that could equip them with the entrepreneurial competencies in preparing them for future careers. This links well with Gorman, Hanlon, and King (1997) who corroborated that participation in EE in this regard has been associated with the increasing interest by students towards choosing entrepreneurship as a viable career option. This is consistent with the findings of scholars (Mwasalwiba 2010; Souitaris, Zerbinati, and Al-Laham 2006) that EE influences the behavior (entrepreneurial activities) of youths who have interest in the economic development of their nation. In a similar vein, studies (Byabashaija, Katono, and Isabalija 2010; Matlay 2008; Ooi et al. 2011; Zhou et al. 2012) empirically proved that EE is an effective means in inspiring/shaping students' actions towards entrepreneurial career as well as increasing their venturing rate. These findings also provide support for Volery and Mueller's (2006) results that documented the role of EE in influencing an individual's decision to become an entrepreneur.

This is supported also by the findings from the analysis of qualitative data which indicate that the disabled students were influenced by EE. The summaries are given as thus: '.....Yah! The course has helped me gain vast knowledge in the areas of identifying business opportunities, sourcing for funds, connecting with business experts and am currently conducting a feasibility study on the type of business to venture into.' (Interviewee 1). ".....There are a number of topical issues I have learned in class. After my exposure to EE, I developed the interest of producing liquid detergents, deodorant, perform, body spray for students on campus. I have started making contacts. I am yet to secure a premise but am working on it. I have also done some small savings which I hope to use in starting the business.' (Interviewee 2)

This also supports action regulation theory which is based on principles of the psychology of work concerned with actions defined as goal-oriented behaviors. Implying that providing EE to disabled students, it will enhance their entrepreneurship action. Moreover, universities and other institutions of higher learning are ideally considered the place in shaping entrepreneurial cultures among students. To this end, they have the mandate to play a leading role in inculcating students with the entrepreneurial knowledge and skills that will be useful in their future career endeavors (Nurmi and Paasio 2007).

## **7. Conclusion and implications**

In this paper, disabled students' EA is examined together with two related variables. The results of the analyses indicated that two EE variables, i.e. pedagogy and the entrepreneurial course content are statistically significant. These results are anticipated to have certain implications to tertiary institutions, students and policy-makers alike. It provides empirical evidence showing the strong predictors of EA through EE (pedagogy and course content) lens. This is a critical factor that tertiary institutions in Nigeria should consider in transmitting entrepreneurship knowledge to disabled students. On the other hand, disabled students must be ready to be flexible in their current learning approach to a more practical way which is required in the entrepreneurial learning process. Policy-

makers and other stakeholders need to develop keen interest in designing entrepreneurship curriculum to cater/accommodate the specific needs of students with disabilities. Future studies should consider other attributes such as disability category, program pursued and religion. Second, although the study provides novel empirical evidence, we suggest that further research where a comparative study between the disabled and non-disabled students be conducted to triangulate the results. Finally, this study is cross-sectional and views held by individuals may change over the years. This suggests that future studies should employ a longitudinal approach to test the robustness of the model. In spite of its limitations, this study reliably makes important contributions as discussed above. Future research may wish to replicate in different country contexts.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

### Notes on Contributors

**Reuel Johnmark Dakung** is a lecturer in the Department of Business Administration, University of Jos-Nigeria. He is currently a doctoral student in entrepreneurship at the Makerere University Business School (MUBS) Kampala, Uganda. His research interests include strategic management, marketing, entrepreneurship education among the minority groups (disabled students, prison inmates, internally displaced persons) and religious entrepreneurship.

**Laura Orobia** is a lecturer in the Department of Accounting and Finance Makerere University Business School, Mbarara Regional Campus Kampala, Uganda. Her research interests include working capital behavior among SMEs, gender differences in business operations, social entrepreneurship.

**John C. Munene** is a professor of Organizational and Industrial Psychology and PhD coordinator at Makerere University Business School.

**Waswa Balunywa** is a professor of Entrepreneurship and the principal at Makerere University Business School, Uganda.

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