Personality, Career Decision Self-Efficacy and Career Choices
Commitment Process among Post-Secondary Vocational Education & Training (VET) Students in Hong Kong

By

Lam Wai Keung, Wallace

BSc (Hons), MSc, MBA, M(Multimedia), M(IT)

A Dissertation Submitted to the Newcastle Business School
Faculty of Business and Law
The University of Newcastle, Australia
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Business Administration

February 2016
Statement of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University’s Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

________________________
Lam Wai Keung, Wallace

22 February 2016
Acknowledgments

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Rakesh Kumar Agrawal, Associate Professor of Indian Institute of Management Kashipur, for his outstanding support, guidance and patience in my dissertation journey. His exceptional advice and feedback are indispensable to complete the full dissertation in a timely mode. His mentorship has given to me an experience in a wide range of ideas on how to become a good researcher.

I would also like to express thank my DBA friends. Their support and companionship have a very good effort on doing my dissertation. A special thank goes to Dr. Daniel Ng, Dr. Steven Lau and Dr. KC Wong, who has given me a lot of valuable comments to work out this dissertation.

Finally and most importantly, I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my family for their endless support, ceaseless encouragement, and enduring love.
**Table of Contents**

Statement of Originality........................................................................................................... i  
Acknowledgments.................................................................................................................. ii  
List of Tables........................................................................................................................ vii  
List of Figures ........................................................................................................................ x  
Abstract ................................................................................................................................ xi

**CHAPTER 1 – Introduction** ............................................................................................. 1  
1.0 Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 1  
1.1 Background to the research ......................................................................................... 1  
1.1.1 College-to-work Transition ......................................................................................... 1  
1.1.2 Characteristics of Students Studying Vocational Education and Training in Hong Kong ............................................................................................................................ 3  
1.1.3 Important of Career Commitment Process .............................................................. 4  
1.2 Aims of the Research ................................................................................................. 6  
1.3 Justification for the Research .................................................................................... 7  
1.4 Research Questions .................................................................................................... 8  
1.5 Significance of the Research .................................................................................... 8  
1.6 Thesis Structure ......................................................................................................... 9  
1.7 Conclusion ................................................................................................................... 9

**CHAPTER 2 – Literature Review** .................................................................................. 10  
2.0 Introduction ................................................................................................................ 10  
2.1 College to Work Transition ....................................................................................... 10  
2.2 The Commitment of Career Choice Process ............................................................. 11  
2.2.1 Career Decision Making Process ........................................................................... 11  
2.2.2 Definition and Structure ......................................................................................... 12  
2.3 Five Factor Model of Personality ........................................................................... 13  
2.3.1 Definition of Personality ......................................................................................... 13  
2.3.2 Personality and the career Commitment Process ............................................... 15  
2.4 The Career Decision Self-Efficacy ............................................................................ 18  
2.4.1 Definition of CDSE ............................................................................................... 18  
2.4.2 CDSE and the Career Commitment Process ....................................................... 20  
2.4.3 Personality and CDSE ......................................................................................... 21
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.11.3</td>
<td>External Validity</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.11.4</td>
<td>Hypothesis Testing</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.11.5</td>
<td>Significance Tests</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1</td>
<td>Demographic of Respondents</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2</td>
<td>Gender Profile</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.3</td>
<td>Employment Experience</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.4</td>
<td>Study Area</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.5</td>
<td>Commitment to Career Choices Scale</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.6</td>
<td>Career Decision Self-efficacy Scale – Short Form</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.7</td>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.8</td>
<td>Normality of Scale Items</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Reliability and Validity Assessment of the Instrument</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1</td>
<td>Reliability Testing</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1.1</td>
<td>Cronbach’s Alpha for Reliability Testing</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1.2</td>
<td>Commitment to Career Choice</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1.3</td>
<td>Career Decision Self-efficacy</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1.4</td>
<td>Personality Traits</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2</td>
<td>Evaluation of Measurement Model by Confirmatory Factor Analysis</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Hypotheses Testing</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1</td>
<td>The Hypothesized Model</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2</td>
<td>The Path Analysis predicting Commitment to Career Choices</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2.1</td>
<td>The path model predicting vocational commitment</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2.2</td>
<td>The path model predicting the tendency of foreclose</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2.3</td>
<td>The path model predicting Vocational Commitment (All personality together)</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2.4</td>
<td>The path model predicting the tendency of foreclose (All personality together)</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5 –Discussion, Implications and Conclusion .................... 129
5.0 Introduction .................................................................................. 129
5.1 Research Framework ..................................................................... 129
5.2 Implications from the findings on relationships among variables ......... 133
  5.2.1 Relationship between CDSE and commitment to career choices .......... 133
  5.2.2 Relationship between Personality and CDSE .................................. 133
  5.2.3 Relationship between Personality and commitment to career choices ...... 134
    5.2.3.1 Relationship between Personality and Vocational Commitment ........ 134
    5.2.3.2 Relationship between Personality and the tendency to foreclose .......... 134
  5.2.4 Mediating effect of CDSE between personality traits and commitment to career choices .............................................................. 135
    5.2.4.1 Mediating effect of CDSE between personality traits and vocational commitment .............................................................. 135
    5.2.4.2 Mediating effect of CDSE between personality traits and the tendency to foreclose .............................................................. 136
5.3 Theoretical implications ................................................................. 136
5.4 Practical implications ................................................................. 137
5.5 Methodological implications ......................................................... 138
5.6 Limitations and future research .................................................... 139
5.7 Summary and Conclusion ............................................................. 140
References ......................................................................................... 141
Appendices ....................................................................................... 156
Appendix A – Organization Consent Form ............................................ 156
Appendix B – Organization Information Statement .................................. 158
Appendix C – Participant Information Statement .................................... 162
Appendix D – Participant Information Statement – Pilot Run ..................... 166
Appendix E – Questionnaire ............................................................... 170
Appendix F – Thesis Examination Application Form .................................. 178
List of Tables

Table 3.1: Construct Operationalization ................................................................. 38
Table 3.2: Factor loading relied on sample size ......................................................... 43
Table 4.1: Demographic Information of Respondents .............................................. 51
Table 4.2: Details of Descriptive Statistics – Mean & Standard Deviation ............. 53
Table 4.3: Gender*Year Crosstabulation ................................................................... 53
Table 4.4: Chi-square Test – Gender Profile ............................................................... 54
Table 4.5: Employment Experience * Year Crosstabulation ....................................... 54
Table 4.6: Chi-Square Tests – Employment Experience .............................................. 55
Table 4.7: Study Area * Year Crosstabulation ............................................................ 55
Table 4.8: Chi-Square Tests – Study Area ................................................................. 55
Table 4.9: Mean, SD, Skewness and Kurtosis of Vocational Exploration and commitment ............................................................... 57
Table 4.10: Mean, SD, Skewness and Kurtosis of Tendency to Foreclose ............. 58
Table 4.11: Mean, SD, Skewness and Kurtosis of CDSE ........................................... 59
Table 4.12: Mean, SD, Skewness and Kurtosis of Personality Traits ..................... 60
Table 4.13: Summary of the Cronbach’s alpha, No of items, Mean and S.D after the Cronbach’s alpha test .............................................................................................................. 63
Table 4.14: Cronbach’s alpha and Corrected Item-Total Correction of TTFS ........ 64
Table 4.15: Cronbach’s alpha and Corrected Item-Total Correction of VECS .......... 65
Table 4.16: Cronbach’s alpha and Corrected Item-Total Correction of CDSE ........ 66
Table 4.17: Cronbach’s alpha and Corrected Item-Total Correction of Mini-IPIP .... 67
Table 4.18: Original model 1: standardized factor loading of VECS ....................... 68
Table 4.19: Revised model standardized factor loading of VECS ............................. 68
Table 4.20: Regression Weights of VECS ................................................................. 69
Table 4.21: Original model 1: standardized factor loading of TTF ......................... 70
Table 4.22: Regression Weights of TTFS ................................................................. 70
Table 4.23: Original model 1: standardized factor loading of CDSE ..................... 71
Table 4.24: Revised model standardized factor loading of CDSE ............................ 72
Table 4.25: Regression Weights of CDSE ................................................................. 72
Table 4.26: Cronbach’s alpha, No. of Items, Mean and SD ....................................... 74
Table 4.27: Inter-Item Correlation Matrix ................................................................. 74
Table 4.28: Coefficients for VEC - CDSE ................................................................. 78
Table 4.29: ANOVA on CDSE – VEC Model Fit ............................................. 78
Table 4.30: Coefficients for VEC - EX .......................................................... 79
Table 4.31: ANOVA on Extraversion – VEC Model Fit .................................. 80
Table 4.32: Coefficients for CDSE - EX .......................................................... 80
Table 4.33: ANOVA on EX – CDSE Model Fit .............................................. 81
Table 4.34: Coefficients for VEC – EX and CDSE ......................................... 82
Table 4.35: ANOVA on VEC – CDSE and EX Model Fit ............................... 82
Table 4.36: Sobel’s (1982) Test on VEC – CDSE – EX Relationship .............. 84
Table 4.37: Coefficients for VEC – AG ........................................................... 84
Table 4.38: Coefficients for CDSE – AG .......................................................... 85
Table 4.39: ANOVA on CDSE – AG Model Fit ............................................. 85
Table 4.40: Coefficients for VEC - CDSE and AG ........................................... 86
Table 4.41: ANOVA on VEC – CDSE – AG Model Fit ................................... 87
Table 4.42: Sobel’s (1982) Test on VEC – CDSE – AG Relationship .............. 88
Table 4.43: Coefficients for VEC - CON .......................................................... 89
Table 4.44: ANOVA on VEC – CON Model Fit ............................................. 89
Table 4.45: Coefficients for CDSE - CON ........................................................ 90
Table 4.46: ANOVA on CDSE – CON Model Fit ........................................... 90
Table 4.47: Coefficients for VEC - CDSE and CON ...................................... 91
Table 4.48: ANOVA on CDSE – CON Model Fit ........................................... 91
Table 4.49: Coefficients for VEC - NEU .......................................................... 92
Table 4.50: ANOVA on VEC - NEU Model Fit .............................................. 93
Table 4.51: Coefficients for CDSE - NEU ........................................................ 93
Table 4.52: ANOVA on CDSE – NEU Model Fit .......................................... 94
Table 4.53: Coefficients for VEC - CDSE and NEU ..................................... 94
Table 4.54: ANOVA on VEC – CDSE – NEU Model Fit ................................ 95
Table 4.56: Coefficients for VEC - OPN .......................................................... 97
Table 4.57: ANOVA on VEC - OPN Model Fit ............................................. 97
Table 4.58: Coefficients for CDSE - OPN ........................................................ 98
Table 4.59: ANOVA on CDSE – OPN Model Fit ......................................... 98
Table 4.60: Coefficients for VEC - CDSE and OPN .................................... 99
Table 4.61: Coefficients for TTF - CDSE ......................................................... 100
Table 4.62: ANOVA on CDSE – TTF Model Fit ............................................... 100
Table 4.63: Coefficients for TTF - EX .......................................................... 101
Table 4.64: ANOVA on TTF – EX Model Fit .............................................. 101
Table 4.65: Coefficients for TTF – CDSE – EX ......................................... 102
Table 4.66: ANOVA on TTF – CDSE – EX Model Fit ................................. 103
Table 4.67: Sobel’s (1982) Test on TTF – CDSE – EX Relationship ......... 104
Table 4.68: Coefficients for TTF – AG .......................................................... 104
Table 4.69: ANOVA on Agreeableness – Tendency to foreclose Model Fit ...... 105
Table 4.70: Coefficients for TTF – CDSE – AG ........................................... 105
Table 4.71: ANOVA on TTF – CDSE – AG Model Fit ................................ 106
Table 4.72: Sobel’s (1982) Test on TTF – CDSE – AG Relationship .......... 107
Table 4.73: Coefficients for TTF – CON ....................................................... 107
Table 4.74: ANOVA on Conscientiousness – Tendency to foreclose Model Fit ...... 108
Table 4.75: Coefficients for TTF – CDSE – CON ....................................... 109
Table 4.76: ANOVA on TTF – CDSE - CON Model Fit ................................ 109
Table 4.77: Sobel’s (1982) Test on TTF – CDSE – CON Relationship .......... 110
Table 4.78: Coefficients for TTF – NEU ....................................................... 111
Table 4.79: Coefficients for TTF – CDSE – NEU ........................................ 112
Table 4.80: ANOVA on TTF – CDSE – CON Model Fit ................................ 112
Table 4.81: Coefficients for TTF – OPN ....................................................... 114
Table 4.82: ANOVA on Openness to experience – Tendency to foreclose Model Fit. 114
Table 4.83: Coefficients for TTF – CDSE – OPN ........................................... 115
Table 4.84: ANOVA on TTF – CDSE - OPN Model Fit ................................ 116
Table 4.85: Sobel’s (1982) Test on TTF – CDSE – OPN Relationship .......... 117
Table 4.86: Coefficients for CDSE – all Personality Traits .......................... 118
Table 4.87: ANOVA on CDSE – All Personality Traits Model Fit ............... 118
Table 4.88: Coefficients for VEC – CDSE – all Personality Traits ................. 120
Table 4.89: Coefficients for TTF – CDSE – all Personality Traits ................. 123
List of Figures

Figure 2.1: The Choice Model of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) ..................22
Figure 3.1: The Conceptual Framework of Research Model.............................................29
Figure 3.2: CDSE’s mediating effect on the relationship between Personality traits and the two dimensions of commitment to career choices ..............................................48
Figure 4.1: Measurement of CFA Model for VECS ..........................................................69
Figure 4.2: Measurement of CFA Model for TTFS ...........................................................71
Figure 4.3: Measurement of CFA Model for CDSE ...........................................................73
Figure 4.4: Hypothesized Model for testing Vocational Commitment .............................75
Figure 4.5: Hypothesized Model for testing Tendency to Foreclose ...............................75
Abstract

Youths are the future leaders of society and they will strive for the betterment and advancement of the society. Career choices among young people have recently drawn attention. Recently, graduates have faced fierce competition in finding job in the job market due to the expansion of higher education. This situation is the same as in Hong Kong. However, most of the graduates have faced difficulties in preparing their career-searching activities and also lack confidence in finding their job in the market (He & Zhou, 2006). To understand what factors influence students’ career choices is becoming more important for most educators and student counselors in colleges and universities. They are required to design appropriate educational programme to cater the diverse needs and inclinations of the students. It is also critical and essential for student counselors to provide suitable support and career advisory services to assist students in finding out and planning for their career after graduation.

The objective of this thesis is to investigate and examine the relationships between personality traits and the career commitment process of students studying vocational education and training (VET) programme in Hong Kong. It also examines the degree to which career decision self-efficacy (CDSE) mediates the relationship between these two constructs. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) is the guiding conceptual framework (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994, 2000) of this study. It was assumed that personality traits were related to two dimensions of career choices commitment process, namely vocational exploration and commitment (VEC) and the tendency to foreclose (TTF) through the effect of career decision self-efficacy.

This is a quantitative research for identifying data patterns or testing a pattern of relationships. This research study was conducted in the form of anonymous questionnaires to be distributed and collected in classes of undergraduate participants in three Hong Kong Institutions of Vocational Education. A total of 362 questionnaires were collected. Among these 362 questionnaires, 58 questionnaires were abandoned for incompleteness or same answers across all questions on the whole questionnaire. Therefore, 304 questionnaires were submitted for final data analysis.
Data analysis comprises three stages. Firstly, an overview of the demographic profiles of the participants was conducted. Secondly, the examination of validity and reliability of data using Cronbach’s alpha testing, exploratory factor analysis and conformity factor analysis were also examined. Lastly, the four hypotheses were tested using SPSS version 23.

In assessing the research questions, multiple regression analysis was employed in this study. The results indicated that CDSE has significant effect on VEC and TTF. All five Personality traits have significant effect on the CDSE. Extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism and openness to experience are significantly affected VEC, whereas only agreeableness and conscientiousness are significantly affected TTF. In relation to the mediation effect, extraversion shows a partially mediation effect on the relationship between personality and VEC while agreeableness and openness to experience have fully mediated on this. Moreover, all personality except neuroticism shows mediation between personality and TTF.