

# An Influence Pathway: Leadership to Culture to Practice to Outcomes

Lorne Whitehead, UBC

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HEQCO Meeting: Measuring the  
Value of a Postsecondary Education

# Why measure quality?

- To make sure the customer gets what's fair
- To guide the improvement of quality
- Let's focus on improvement:
  - More respectful
  - Many agree improvement is needed
  - Many believe it is possible with current resources

Regarding measurement of quality,  
most people would agree that:

- If we do **not** measure quality,  
quality will **not** improve.
- Some would say, therefore:
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Regarding measurement of quality,  
most people would agree that:

- If we do **not** measure quality,  
quality will **not** improve.
- Therefore:
- **In order** to improve quality,  
one thing we **must do** is measure it.
- And it can't hurt, right?
- **Wrong!**

# Many strong, different opinions because:

- Human behaviour is complex
- Organizations are complex
- Understanding is complex
- Learning is even more complex
- **Conclusion – measurement of quality is needed, but so is great care.**

## In this talk:

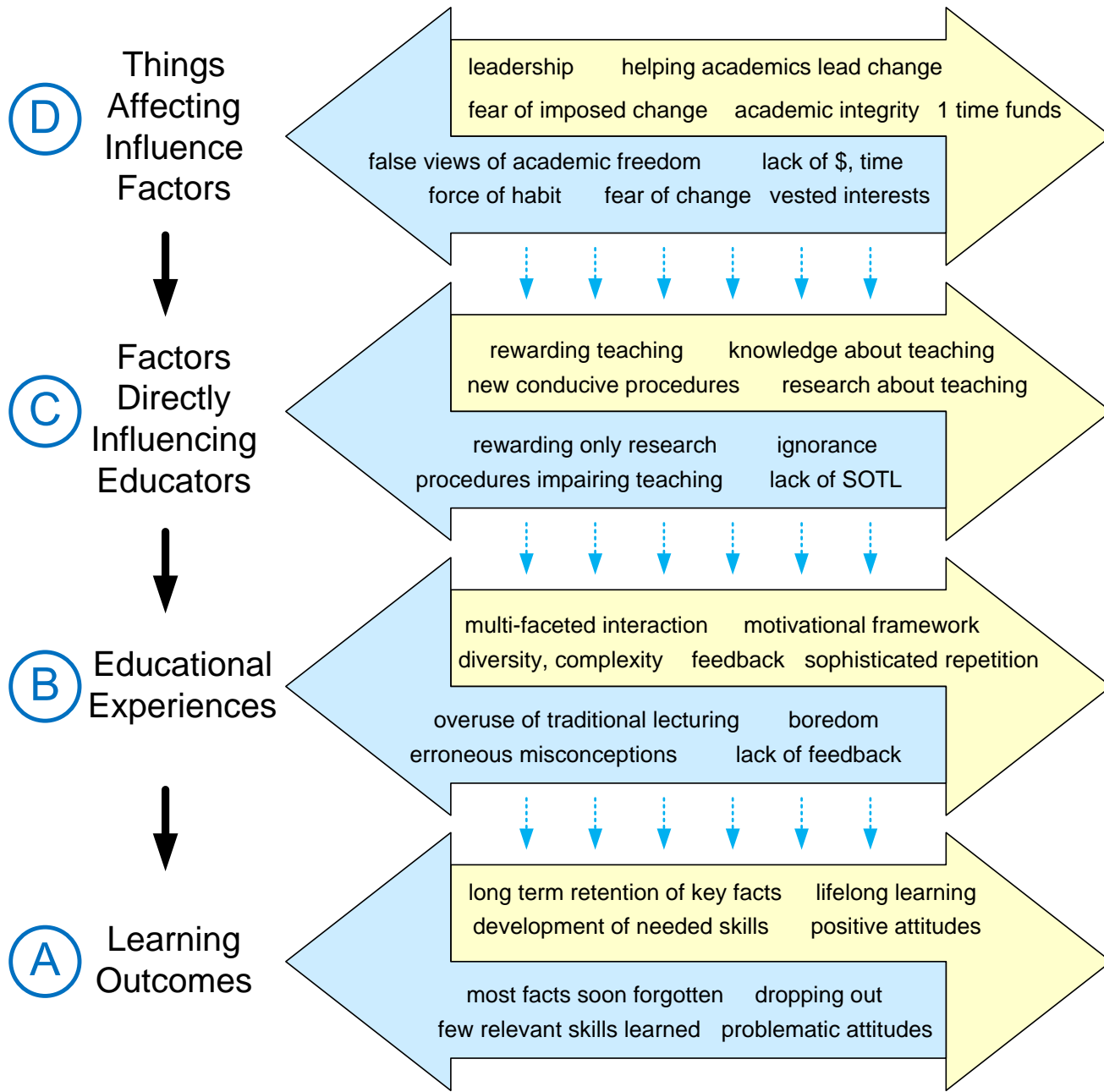
- Explore some of this complexity
- Discuss opposing views that have arisen
- Share two possible ways forward
- Mention some upcoming next steps

# Problems with measurement:

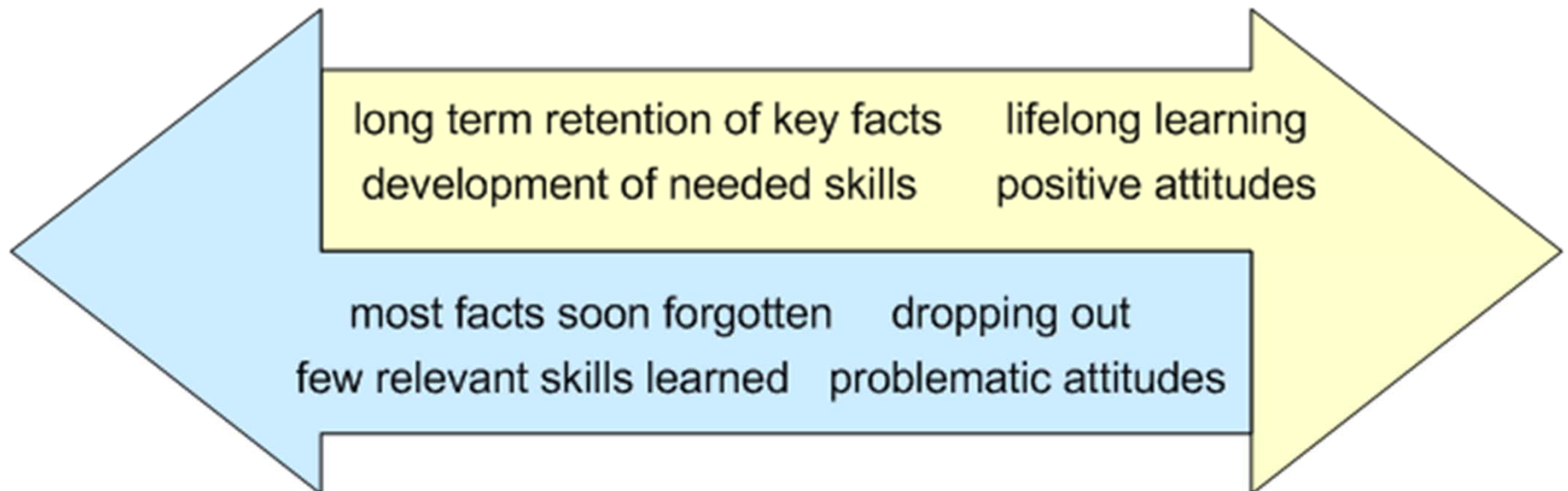
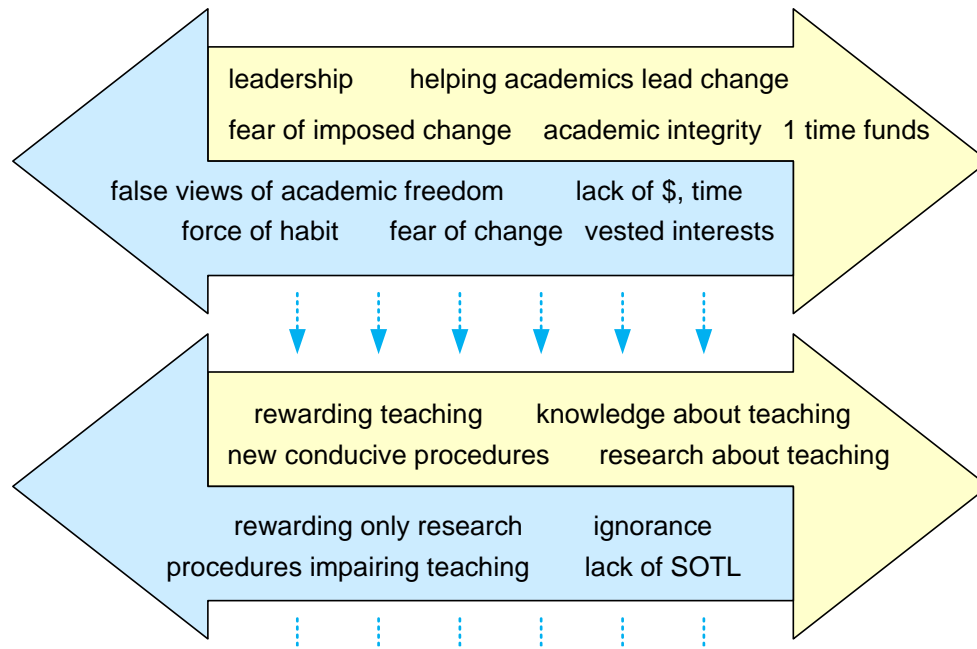
- inaccuracy
- perturbation by measurement
- tendency to emphasize the easily measured
- inadvertently ignoring diversity, complexity
- time delays inherent in measurement process
- cost and effort required
- sometimes, measurement just feels wrong



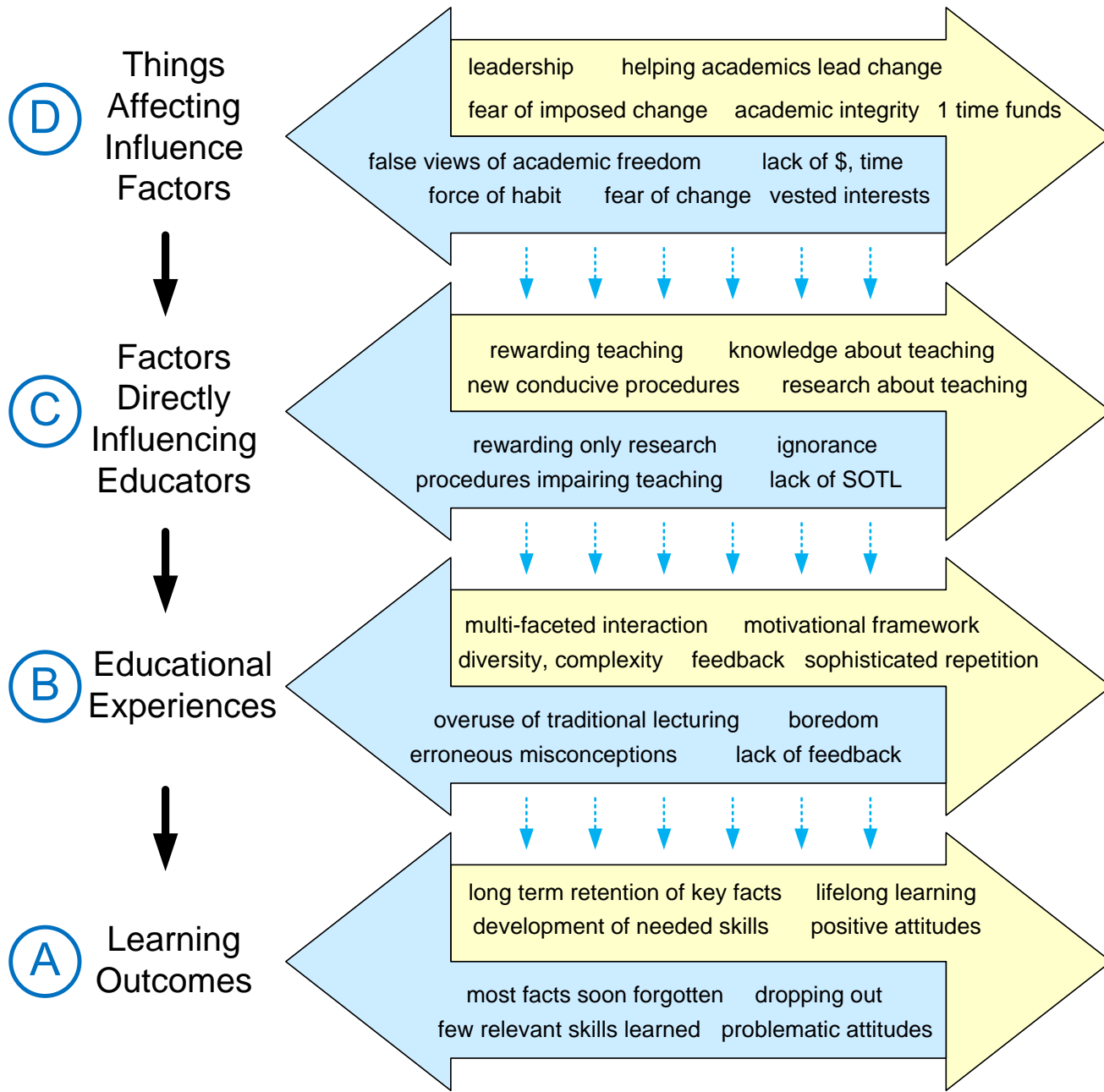
# Hierarchy of Factors Related to Learning



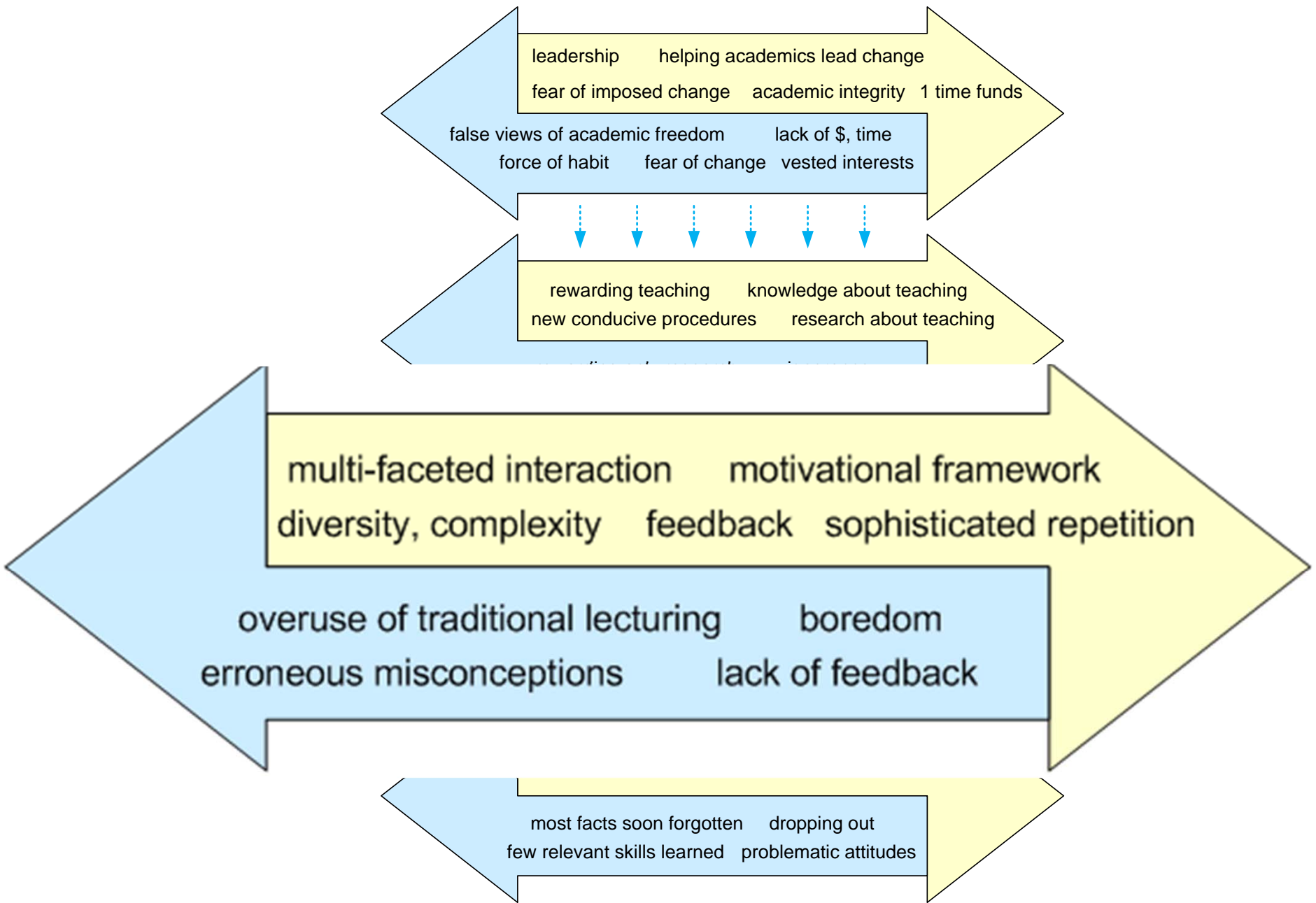
# Improvement



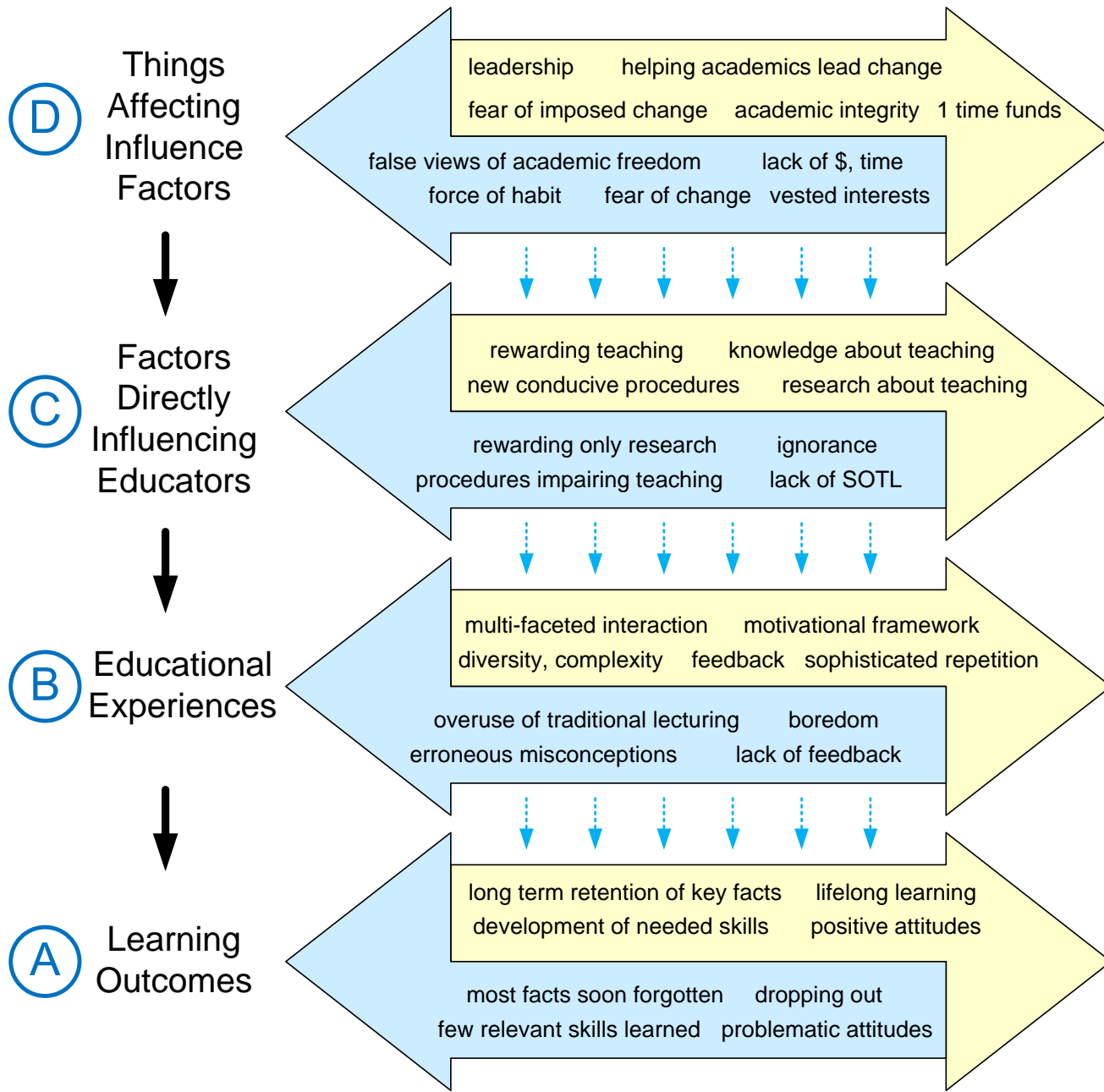
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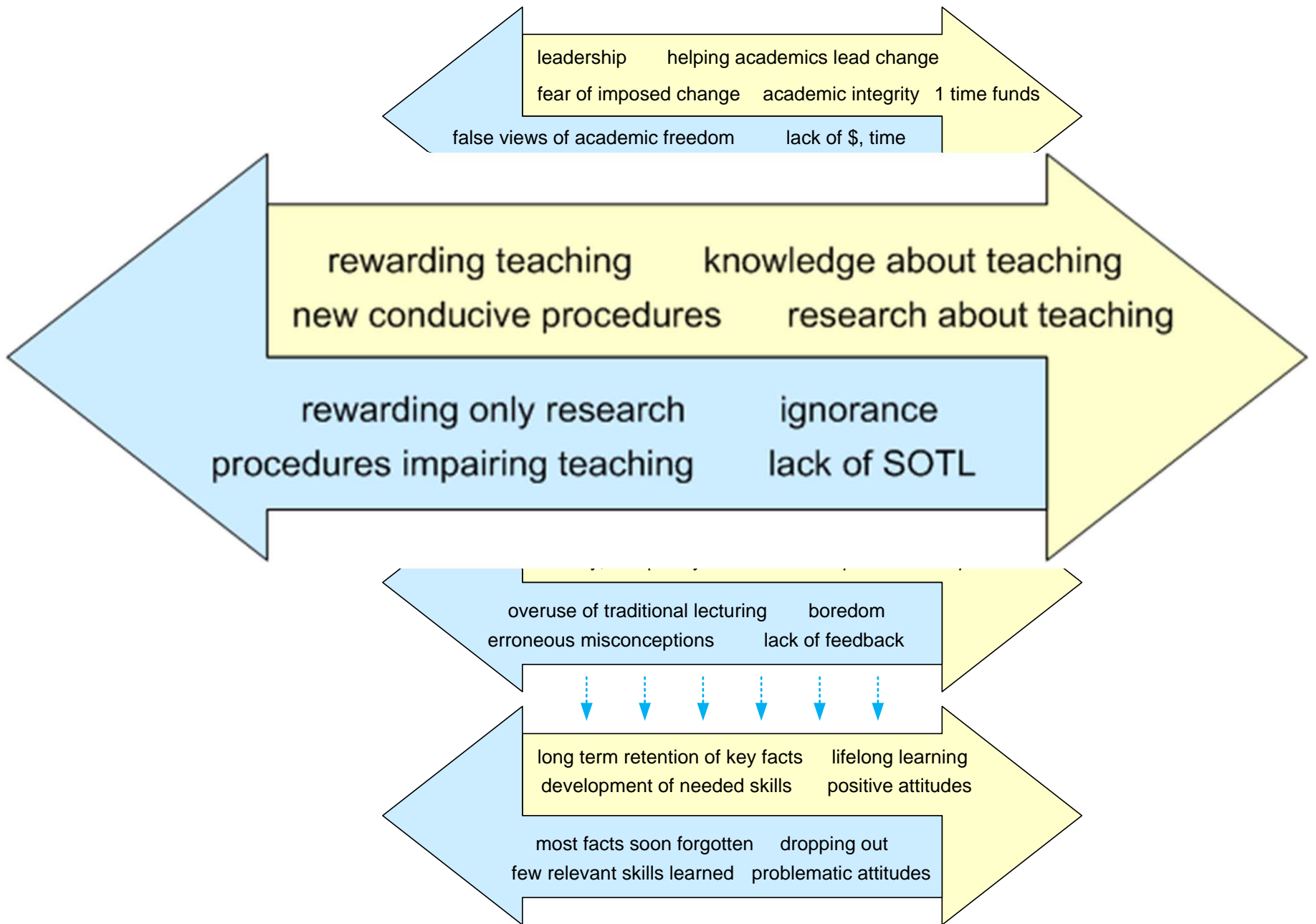
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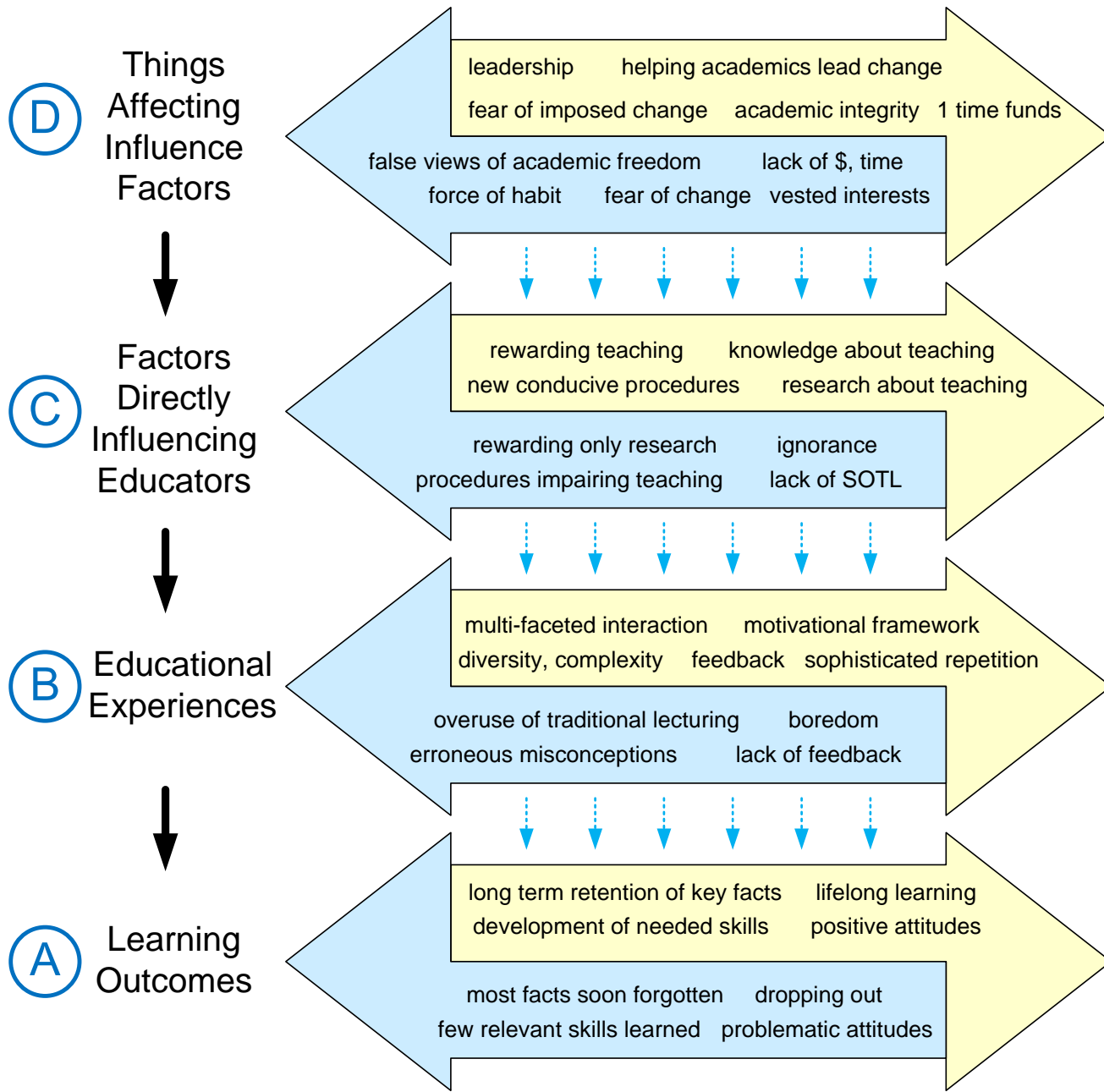
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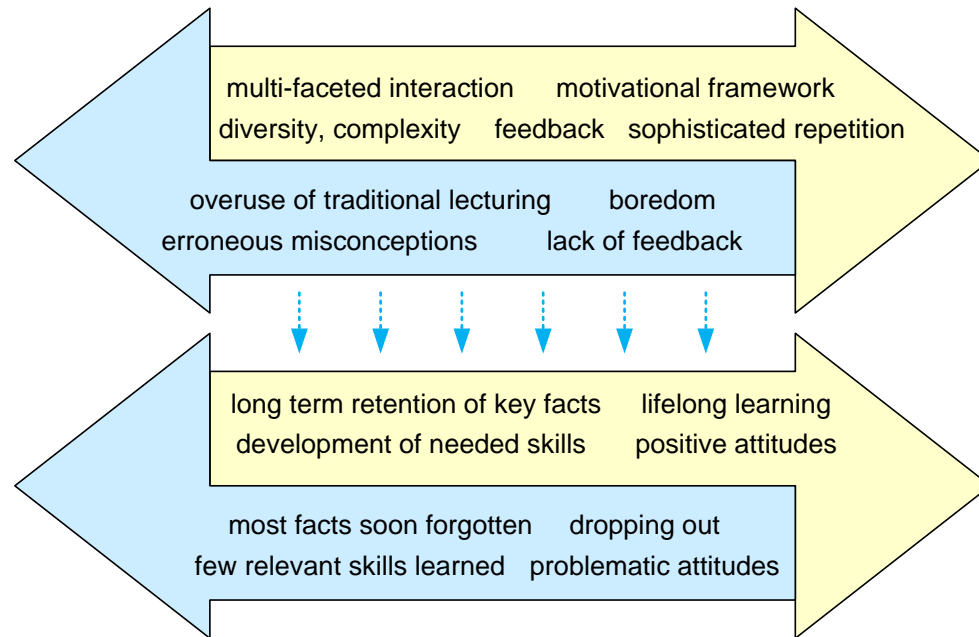
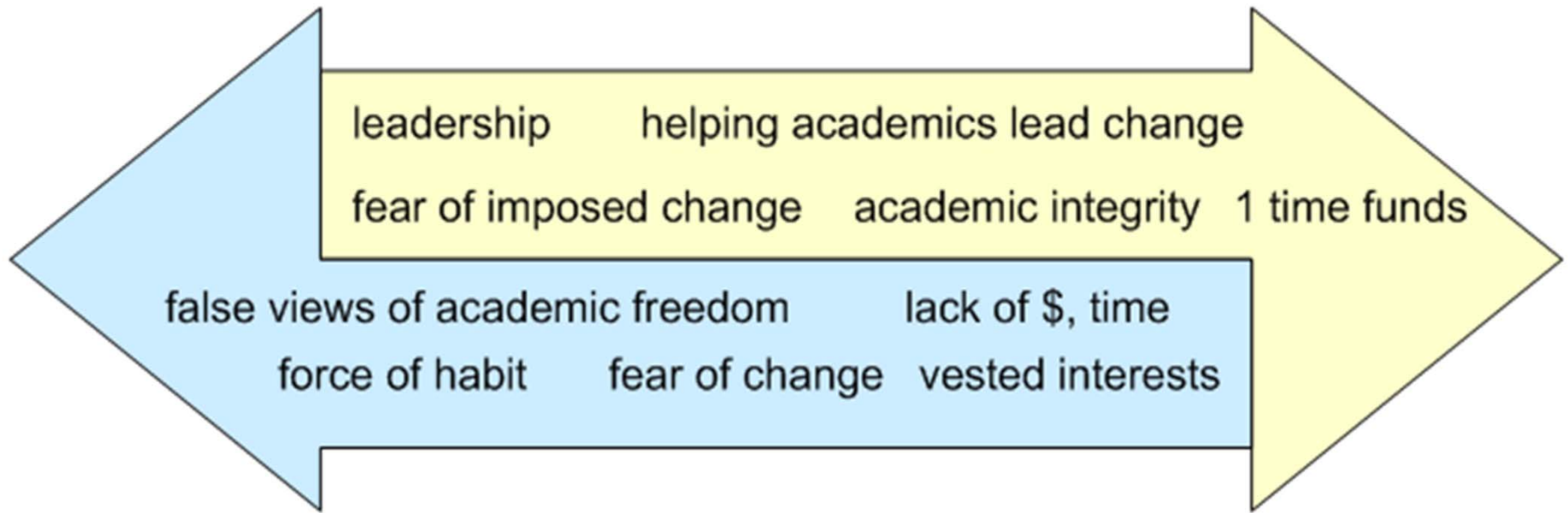
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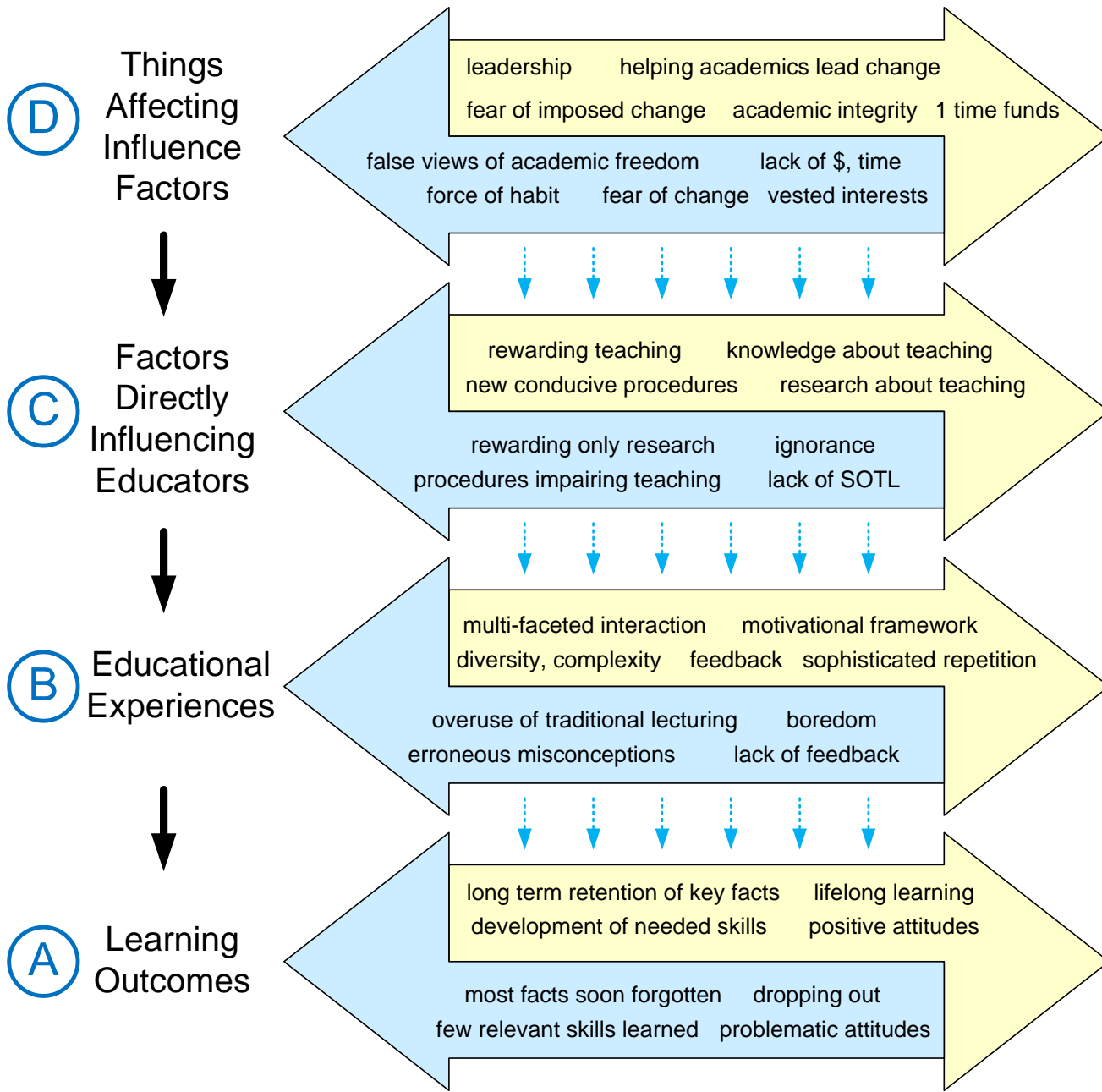


# Improvement



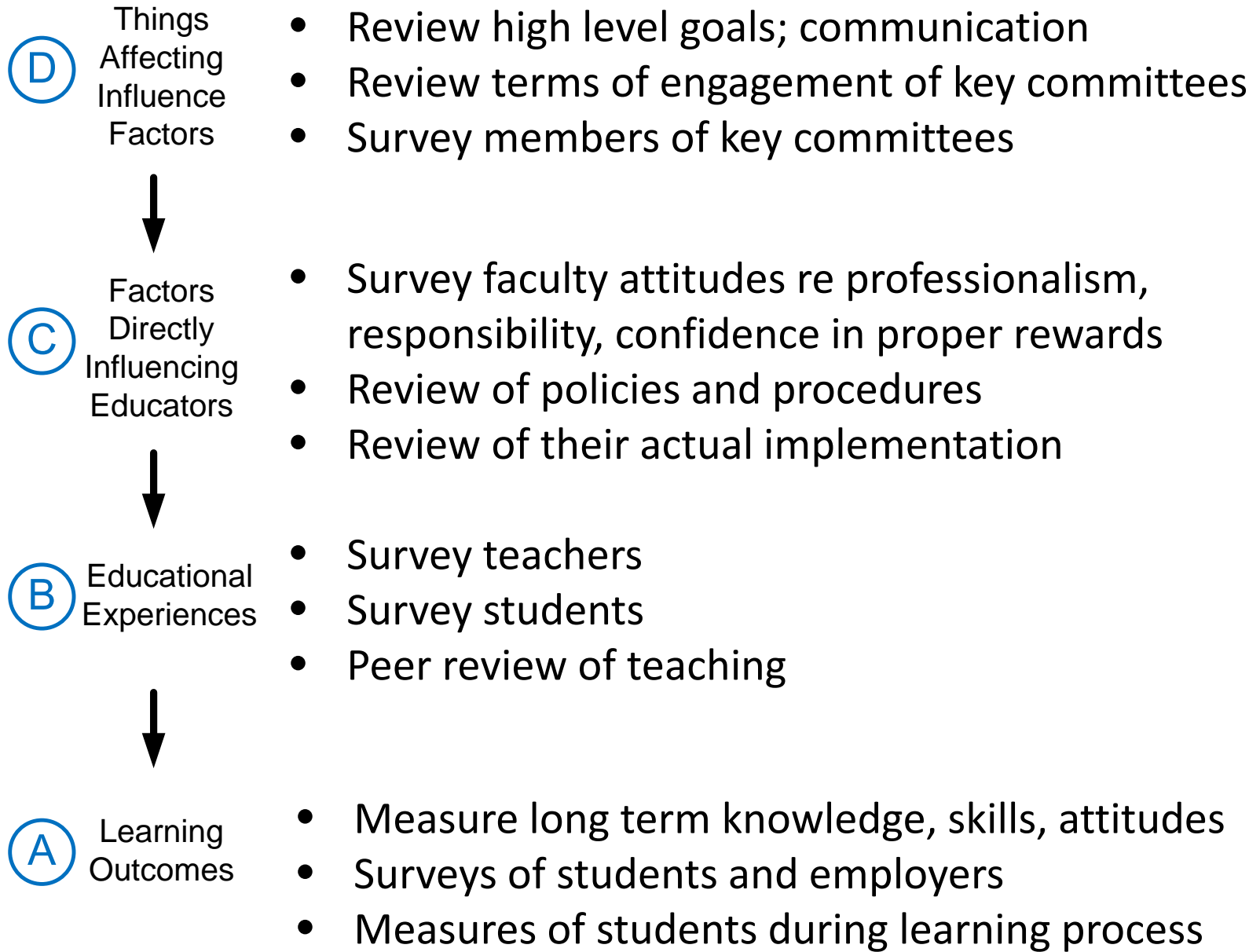


# Hierarchy of Factors Related to Learning



# Improvement

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## All this complexity can cause misunderstandings and disagreement:

- Two “cultural extremes” seem to have emerged
- On the “left” those who view experimental approaches as simplistic and potentially harmful
- On the “right” those who view such criticism as vague excuses for avoiding accountability
- A big problem is that such polarization depletes the valuable middle ground:
- Balanced, whole-minded, objective inquiry

## Two preliminary suggested solutions:

- Carl Wieman Science Education Initiative
  - At University of British Columbia and University of Colorado Boulder, with other sites under discussion
- Carnegie Foundation Networked Improvement Communities
  - Led from Carnegie Foundation in Palo Alto
  - Involves institutions mainly in US and Canada

# A generalized description of the Carl Wieman Science Education Initiative:

- Identify people in organization who are leaders of quality
- Explain temporary new resources will be awarded competitively
- Make the award match the culture
- Leaders brainstorm on what “customers” really need and how to measure. The quality leaders “do this to themselves.”
- Under direction of these leaders, new work starts on this basis.
- Leaders get the credit for early wins; work expands.
- When temporary new sources end, these new habits persist.

# Carnegie Foundation: Building quality through Networked Improvement Communities:

- A fleet of coordinated inquiries
- Practical measurement and design
- Analyzing variability: What works, for whom, under what set of conditions?
- A dynamic accumulating evidence strategy—  
learning together, improving together

Latest effort – a synthesis of both...

**Network for**

**Evidence-informed** cooperative investigation  
of scalable methods for the

**Enhancement of** the sustainable adoption, in  
organizations of higher education, of

**Education** community processes that are  
beneficial for all stakeholders.

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