

Dropout in OHE and the time factor

- Context: studies on *factors* that influence attrition, retention, persistence, and success
- new models of attrition and profiles of students most likely to dropout/persist
- persisters are academically prepared, possess time management skills and high levels of engagement, self-directedness, self-discipline, motivation, and commitment (Holder, 2007)

Traditional, brick-and-mortar universities

- time factor: important issue for dropout in many studies (Kember, 1999), due to
- conflicting demands from family, work, and social commitments

Online open universities

- time-related issues: most important factors for drop out/persistence (Lee & Choi, 2011)

UOC context

Fully distance teaching university; eLearning is mostly self-directed and self-regulated (increases individual responsibility)

- *nontraditional learners*: mature-aged or adult, with full- or part-time jobs and family responsibilities
- dropout occurs mostly in the first semester
- crucial: misconceptions about workload/work-family commitments

Time factor: initial review and implications

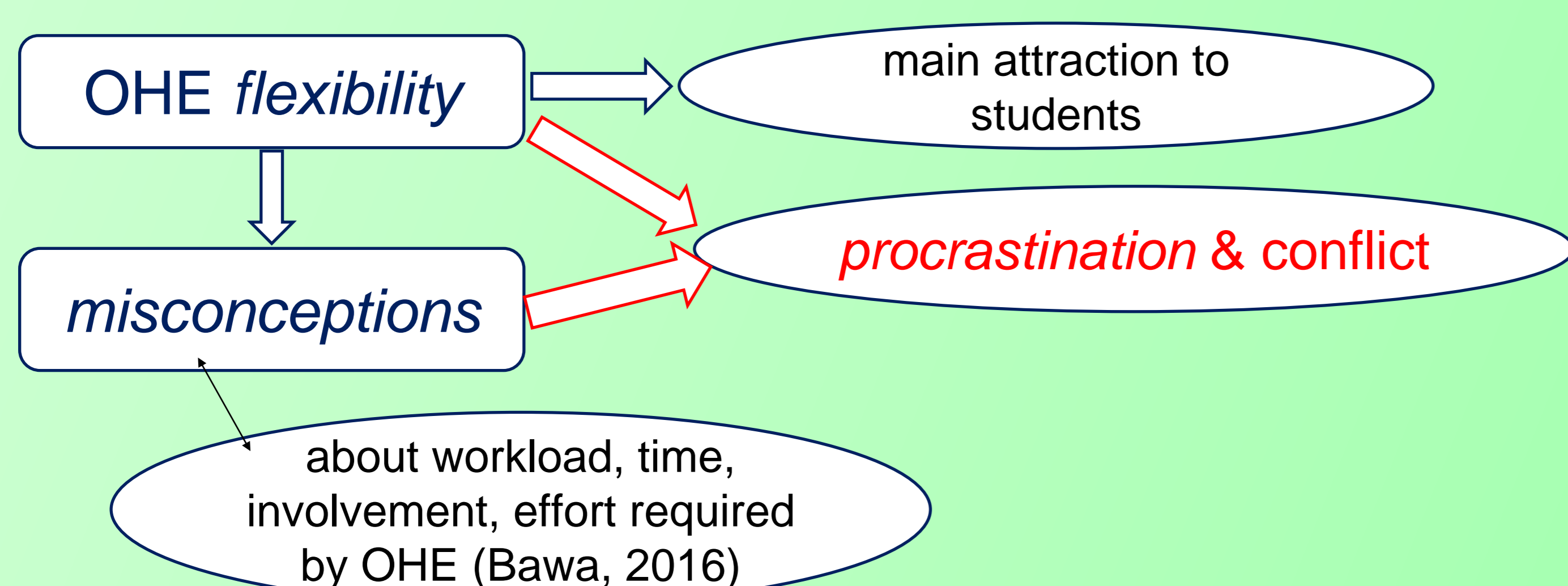


Fig. 1. Key time-related issues for dropout

Therefore:

- *time management* is essential for persistence and successful e-learning (Holder, 2007; Lee & Choi, 2011)
- conflicting work-life demands are the most common reason for withdrawal (Ashby, 2004)

Theoretical approaches

Time management approach

- ability to plan study time and tasks (Broadbent & Poon, 2015)
- part of academic self-regulated learning strategies
- strongly connected to academic achievement and performance; key factor for persistence
- specific learner characteristic in time management: *academic procrastination* - negatively related to participation and performance (Michinov et al., 2011)

Conclusion: lack of time, time management, and procrastination are the primary reasons for students failing or dropping an online course (Doherty, 2006).

Work-study-home conflict/balance approach

- degree to which work affects the student's ability to meet school-related demands and responsibilities (McNall & Michel, 2017)
- derived from research work-family balance/conflict
- emphasis on conflict (WSC) dominates research
- nontraditional students experience intense conflicts between the work, study, and home domains, especially females (Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002)
- WSC is negatively related to academic performance (Owen, Kavanagh, & Dollard, 2017)

Future directions: possible interventions

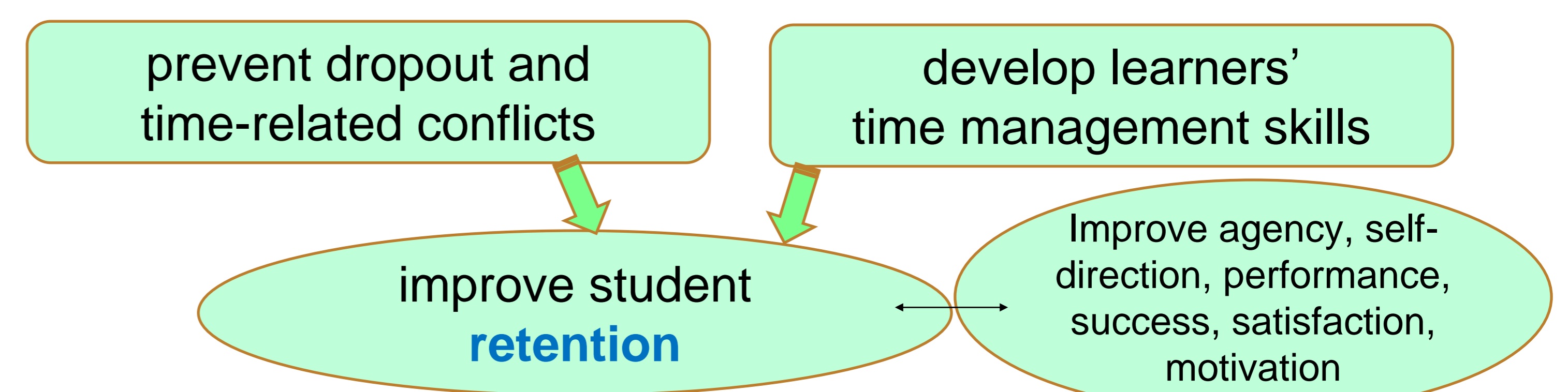


Fig. 2. Possible interventions

- should focus: first academic year, especially the first semester (highest attrition rates)
- embedded in ampler interventions addressing situational, institutional, and personal factors:
 - flexibility in student assessment
 - identify at-risk students early on – personalized support, introductory module
 - targeted advice and orientation
 - personalized course plans, especially for first enrolment

@UOC: recent research/interventional institutional project addressing those issues - **ESPRIA** ("First-year students"), which provides freshmen with flexible learning paths at course and semester level