

# **Dialogue, feedback and large lecture classes: an impossible mix?**

Mark Huxham

School of Life, Sport and Social Sciences

## So what is ‘feedback’?

- ‘information about how the student’s present state (of learning and performance) relates to... goals and standards’ where the goals and standards referred to could include ‘specific targets, criteria, standards and other external reference points (e.g. exemplars)’

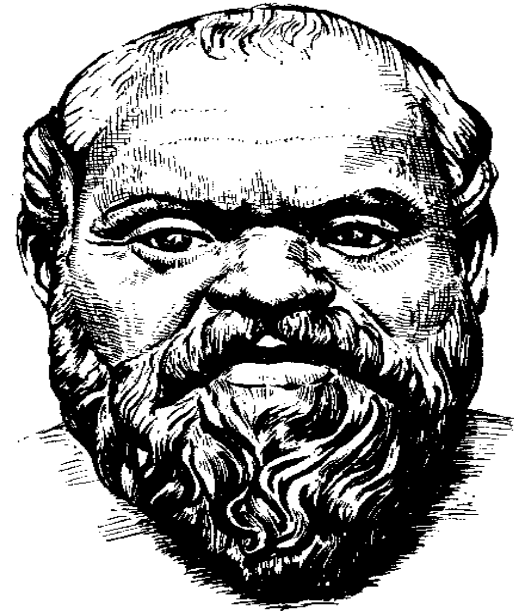
Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006)

# Two models

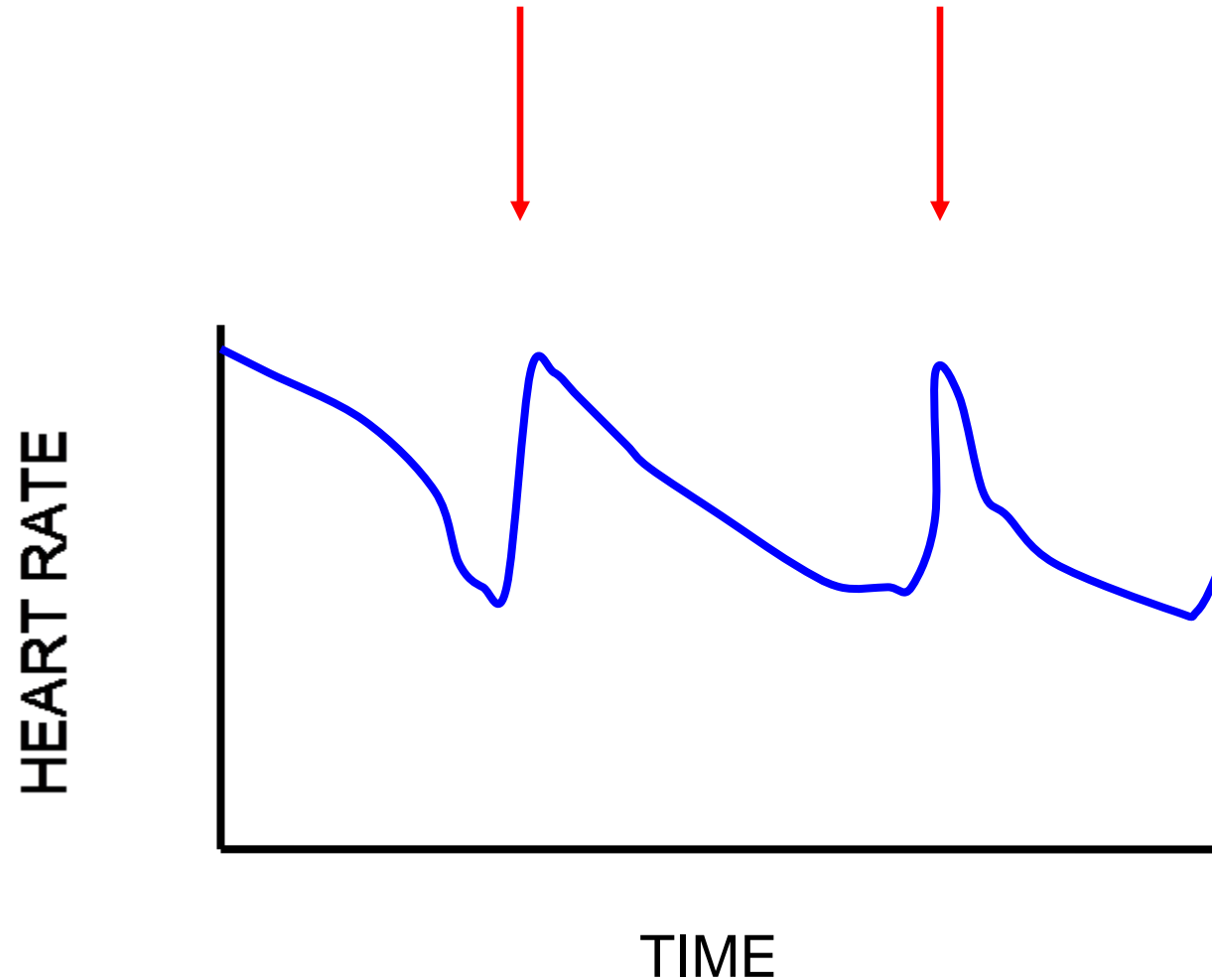


Be on your guard;  
*Unmanageable oaf* cuts both ways.  
*Finds the subject difficult,*  
Acquitting you, converts  
Oaf into idiot, usher to master.

("Reports" by U.A. Fanthorpe)



[The goal of dialogic feedback is for] participants to have thoughts they could not have had on their own, yet to recognise these thoughts as developments of their own thinking  
(Game & Metcalfe, 2009).



Adapted from: BLIGH, D. A. (1998) *What's the Use of Lectures?* Exeter: Intellect.



# What is ‘the best tested principle in psychology’?

1. Conditioned responses
2. Learned hopelessness
3. The importance of open mindsets
4. Formative feedback
5. The Lake Woebegon effect

# Tipping out the boot grit (and pocketing the thought stones)

- ‘Boot grit’ might be small, but can cause ‘academic blisters’ if ignored
- Students put written, anonymous comments in the ‘boot grit box’
- Nearly all comments are about one or a few issues – so easily dealt with
- Students also record their ‘thought stones’ after each lecture



## **Lets try the textwall – phones at the ready**

- What are the ‘dangers in dialogue?’
- Text ‘earth’ followed by your message to:
- 07537 402 400

# E-grit – some examples:

- Factual: “what is polyploidy?”
- Conceptual: “Does natural selection apply to only the strong survive because it says the best traits stand out and re passed on”
- Personal: “don't leave :( we like your lectures”
- Too personal: “my girlfriend is pregnant - what do i do?”

-so using textwalls can be risky and unpredictable, just like real dialogue!





# So is ‘an on-going and developmental dialogue’ possible in a class of 200?

Yes!

... in a culture where lecturers strive:

*‘.....to lecture less, to convince students of the intellectual aims of their courses, and to create opportunities, in lessons and outside, in which [dialogue] can flourish.’*

↑  
Clarity

Exemplars explored  
and discussed

Feedback on explicit  
criteria and learning  
outcomes

The 'hidden  
curriculum'

Dialogue

'Consumer models'  
e.g. choosing  
modules on basis of  
promised feedback

Control →

Criteria and outcomes  
reviewed, discussed,  
contested and  
evolving throughout

Feedback on criteria  
collectively agreed  
but then fixed

'Confessional forum'

