## **Different types of question**

There are many different types of question, and different books will deploy their own typologies. Common types are as follows:

## Open and closed questions

- Closed questions (also known as convergent questions) will have one clear answer (e.g. "How much is 4 times 8?")
- Open questions (also known as divergent questions) can have a range of possible answers, although some will be better than others and it is possible to give a wrong answer to an open question (e.g. "What do you think makes a country democratic?")

## Directed and non-directed questions

- Directed questions are aimed at a named individual (e.g. "Amy, can you tell me what the difference is between an overt observation and a covert observation?")
- Non-directed questions are ones that any student in the class is free to try answering (e.g. "Can anyone tell me the difference between an overt observation and a covert observation?")

As this second distinction relates less to a *type* of question than to a way of *distributing* questions around the class, it is possible to have four sorts of question:

- directed open questions
- directed closed questions
- non-directed open questions
- non-directed closed questions

Closely related to the issue of the *type* of question to ask is the issue of the *level* of question to ask. Drawing on **Bloom's Taxonomy** of educational objectives, it is possible to delineate six different levels of cognitive complexity that questions can operate at. They are outlined on the next page with the ones at the top being regarded as the most complex and the ones at the bottom being regarded as the least complex. It is worth keeping this taxonomy in mind when thinking of who to direct which question at within a class.

## Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives

**Evaluation** – questions at this highest level of behavioural complexity *require the student to form judgements and make decisions using stated criteria*. These criteria may be subjective (when a personal set of values is used in making a decision) or objective (when scientific evidence or procedures are used in evaluating something) as appropriate to the task. An example question would be "Using evidence of your own choosing, do capitalist or socialist countries have a higher standard of living?" <u>Action verbs</u> to use in questions at this level are as follows: appraise, defend, assess, justify and defend, as well as strengths and weaknesses, advantages and disadvantages, and arguments for and against.

**Synthesis** – questions at this level *ask the student to produce something unique or original such as to design a solution, compose a response, or predict an outcome to a problem for which the student has never before seen, read or heard a response* (e.g. "What would an economic system be like that combines the main features of capitalism and socialism?").

<u>Action verbs</u> to use in the formulating of questions at this level include the following: create, devise, formulate, predict, produce and imagine.

**Analysis** – questions at this level *require the student to break a problem into its component parts and to draw relationships among the parts* (e.g. "What factors distinguish capitalism from socialism?"). Purposes of questions at this level may be to identify logical errors; to differentiate among facts, opinions and assumptions; to derive conclusions; and to find inferences or generalisations – in short, to discover the reasons behind the information given.

<u>Action verbs</u> to use when formulating questions at this level are as follows: break down, differentiate, distinguish, separate out, classify, compare, give reasons, and give causes and effects.

**Application** – these questions go beyond memorisation and translation of facts, *requiring the student to apply facts to a problem, context or environment that is different from the one in which the information was learned* (e.g. "What countries from among those listed do you believe have a capitalist economic system?"). <u>Action verbs</u> that can be used when formulating questions at this level are as follows: apply, demonstrate, employ, operate, solve, and use.

**Comprehension** – such questions require some level of understanding of facts the student has committed to memory as they will *require the student to explain, summarise or elaborate on the facts that have been learned* (e.g. "Can you, in your own words, explain the concept of capitalism?"). <u>Action verbs</u> that can be used in the formulating of questions at this level include the following: convert, explain, extend, paraphrase, re-phrase and summarise.

**Knowledge** – such questions will *require the student to recall, describe, define or recognise facts that have already been committed to memory* (e.g. "What is the definition of capitalism?"). <u>Action verbs</u> that can be used to formulate questions at this level include the following: define, describe, identify, list, name, and recite.