Intervención social y jóvenes

Idioma: EN

EXAM STATEMENT:

Exam duration: 90 minutes. No materials are permitted. You must choose two of the three questions to answer. In the questions, you must answer the underlined parts. The non-underlined parts are the context of the question. The content of the answers must include all the central aspects addressed in the heading/subheading of the topic. Each answer must be structured in an orderly manner, coherent, and conceptually precise, avoiding generalisations. Careful writing and no spelling mistakes will also be taken into consideration to pass the exam. Similarities and/or literalities between exams will be grounds for failure. Likewise, literal reproductions of the basic text are not permitted, except for those referring to specific definitions and classifications of an author(s), institutions or organisations.

Question 1: Strategies for socio-educational intervention in the context of participation and social sustainability. (The strategic approach to socio-educational intervention in different contexts).

Question 2: Strategies for socio-educational intervention in the context of complexity and the ecology of action. (The strategic approach to socio-educational intervention in different contexts).

Question 3: Research for action: young people facing social difficulties. (Evaluating and researching for action).

Question 1

Strategies for socio-educational intervention in the context of participation and social sustainability. (The strategic approach to socio-educational intervention in different contexts).

STUDENT RESPONSE:

Strategies for socio-educational intervention with young people in a context of participation and social sustainability require a strategic approach that links (a) the recognition of youth as a social stage and a heterogeneous collective, (b) the promotion of meaningful participation as a right and a method, and (c) the pursuit of socially sustainable outcomes (cohesion, equity, inclusion, and intergenerational responsibility) through coordinated, evaluable actions across different settings.

1. Conceptual and contextual foundations for strategic intervention
Youth is not only an age category but a socio-historical construction shaped by institutional pathways (education, labour market, housing, welfare systems) and cultural expectations. Contemporary youth transitions are increasingly non-linear and unequal, influenced by precarious employment, difficulties in access to housing, digitalisation, changes in family trajectories, and new forms of participation and identity. Therefore, socio-educational intervention must avoid treating "youth" as a homogeneous group and must incorporate an intersectional perspective (class, gender, migration status, disability, territory, ethnicity) to identify differentiated opportunities, risks, and resources.

A strategic approach entails:
a) An ecological and systemic reading of situations (person–family–peer group–school/work–community–institutions–digital environments).
b) A rights-based and citizenship approach: young people as subjects of rights, not only recipients of services.
c) A strengths-based orientation, focusing on capabilities, resilience, and social capital, without ignoring structural constraints.
d) A sustainability lens: promoting interventions that are equitable, long-term, community-embedded, and environmentally and socially responsible, avoiding short-term or purely assistential responses that reproduce dependency or exclusion.

2. Participation as axis: from consultation to co-decision and co-production
Participation should be treated both as an objective (youth civic development) and as a methodology (better diagnoses, relevant actions, legitimacy). Strategic intervention distinguishes between symbolic participation and substantive participation. Frameworks such as Hart's ladder (from tokenism to shared decision-making) or Arnstein's ladder (degrees of citizen power) help to operationalise participation levels and avoid purely consultative practices.

Key strategic criteria for participatory socio-educational intervention:
a) Conditions for participation: accessible information, time, safe spaces, recognition of diversity, support for communicative and deliberative skills, and removal of barriers (economic, linguistic, digital, disability-related).
b) Shared governance: youth advisory groups, youth councils, co-management of spaces and projects, participatory budgeting in municipalities or organisations.

c) Co-production of solutions: young people involved in diagnosing needs, designing activities, implementing actions (peer roles), and evaluating results.
d) Ethical safeguards: informed consent, protection from exposure and stigma, confidentiality, and attention to power relations between professionals and young participants.

3. Social sustainability: aims and strategic implications
Social sustainability in youth intervention refers to strengthening social cohesion and inclusion over time by ensuring fair access to resources, opportunities, and recognition. It incorporates:
a) Equity: targeted universalism (universal measures with intensified support for those in greater disadvantage).
b) Social cohesion and coexistence: conflict mediation, intercultural dialogue, anti-discrimination measures, and community bonding.
c) Intergenerational justice: policies and projects that do not shift costs to future cohorts (e.g., pathways to stable employment, mental health promotion, housing inclusion).
d) Territorial sustainability: strengthening local networks and services so responses are not dependent on isolated projects.

Thus, the strategic approach requires aligning micro-level change (skills, empowerment, wellbeing) with meso- and macro-level change (institutional coordination, access to rights, community resources, policy advocacy).

4. Strategic phases of socio-educational intervention in participatory and sustainable terms
4.1 Participatory diagnosis and assessment
A rigorous diagnosis combines quantitative and qualitative sources:
a) Sociodemographic and contextual analysis: education, employment, NEET situations, housing, family income, local service map, community assets, digital divide.
b) Risk and protection factors: school dropout, substance use, violence, self-harm, online risks, discrimination, loneliness; protective roles of supportive adults, peer networks, community participation, meaningful education/work.
c) Asset-based mapping (community strengths) and social capital assessment: bonding (peer/family), bridging (diverse networks), and linking (connections to institutions). This helps identify opportunities for network-based interventions.

Tools include interviews, focus groups, participatory mapping, service-user journeys, and youth-led data collection, ensuring representation of less visible groups.

4.2 Planning and design: theory of change and project coordination
Planning should translate the diagnosis into a coherent intervention design:
a) Clear objectives: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound; balancing developmental aims (competences, autonomy) with structural aims (access to services, rights, opportunities).
b) Theory of change: how activities lead to outputs and outcomes, identifying assumptions and contextual risks.
c) Intersectoral coordination: education, social services, employment services,

health/mental health, justice, housing, and community organisations. Coordination mechanisms include case conferences, referral protocols, shared indicators, and information-sharing agreements consistent with data protection.
d) Sustainability planning: stable partnerships, training of local agents, resource diversification, and institutional anchoring so achievements persist beyond funding cycles.

4.3 Implementation strategies across contexts (different intervention settings)
A strategic approach adapts methods to each context while maintaining participatory and sustainable principles:

a) Community and neighbourhood settings (youth work, street education, community development)
- Outreach and street-based socio-educational work for young people with low service linkage.
- Youth community centres with co-managed programming (culture, sports, digital creation, mutual aid).
- Service-learning and community projects that connect youth contributions to local needs, strengthening belonging and cohesion.
- Mediation and restorative practices to address conflicts and improve coexistence.

b) Educational settings (schools, vocational training, second-chance education)
- Early warning and support for school disengagement through multi-professional teams.
- Peer mentoring, cooperative learning, and participation structures that increase voice and school attachment.
- Guidance and transitions work: support in educational/labour transitions, internships with rights protections, and coordination with employment services.
- Family-school-community bridges to support young people in vulnerable contexts.

c) Employment and social inclusion pathways
- Integrated itineraries combining skills training, psychosocial support, and placement, with attention to labour rights and prevention of precarious "activation" without real opportunities.
- Mentoring by professionals and peers, networking with local employers, and support for entrepreneurship when realistic and not used to individualise structural problems.
- Complementary supports: housing advice, income support access, administrative regularisation guidance for migrants when applicable.

d) Health, mental health, and risk-behaviour prevention
- Promotion and prevention models focused on wellbeing, emotional regulation, and healthy leisure, avoiding moralising approaches.
- Harm reduction strategies where relevant (e.g., substance use), combined with motivational interviewing and referral pathways.
- Digital wellbeing: education on online risks, cyberviolence prevention, and critical media literacy, recognising the centrality of digital environments for identity and participation.

e) Protection systems and youth at high risk (care leavers, justice-involved youth, unaccompanied minors)
- Individualised socio-educational plans with strong relational continuity (reference professional), combined with network coordination (education, health, housing).
- Gradual autonomy programmes: life skills, supported housing, accompaniment in administrative procedures, and sustained mentoring beyond legal age transitions.
- Restorative and community-based alternatives when possible, addressing stigma and fostering reintegration.

4.4 Evaluation, accountability, and learning for sustainability
Participation also shapes evaluation: young people should be involved in defining success criteria and interpreting results. A strategic evaluation includes:
a) Process indicators: reach, participation quality (degree of influence in decisions), retention, coordination functioning, fidelity to participatory principles.
b) Outcome indicators: educational re-engagement, employment stability, wellbeing measures, reduced risk behaviours, improved social support, increased civic participation.
c) Social capital and network outcomes: strengthened bridging and linking ties; improved access to institutions and opportunities; reduced isolation.
d) Equity focus: disaggregated results (gender, migrant status, disability, neighbourhood) to detect whether interventions reduce or reproduce gaps.
e) Mixed methods: surveys, administrative data, interviews, participatory evaluation workshops, and case studies.
f) Use of findings: feedback loops for continuous improvement, public accountability, and advocacy for structural changes.

5. Role of organisations and services: public, private, and third sector
Sustainable participatory intervention typically requires collaboration between:
a) Public social services: ensuring rights-based access, case management, safeguarding, and continuity.
b) Educational and health systems: universal settings critical for early detection and prevention.
c) Third sector organisations: often closer to community realities, innovative methods, and trust-building; however, coordination and stable funding are needed to avoid fragmentation.
d) Private actors (when involved): must be aligned with ethical standards, transparency, and social goals, particularly in employability programmes.

Professionals must combine technical competence (planning, evaluation, network work) with relational and ethical competence (non-stigmatising practice, cultural humility, power-awareness). The strategic approach is, therefore, not a set of isolated activities but a coordinated, participatory, evaluable and equity-oriented intervention architecture that strengthens young people's capabilities and community bonds, generating socially sustainable outcomes over time.

Question 2

Strategies for socio-educational intervention in the context of complexity and the ecology of action. (The strategic approach to socio-educational intervention in different contexts).

STUDENT RESPONSE:

Socio-educational intervention with young people increasingly takes place in contexts characterised by complexity: multiple, interacting determinants (economic, relational, cultural, institutional, digital), rapid change, and uncertainty. A strategic approach in this scenario requires moving away from linear causal models (problem → cause → solution) and adopting systemic, ecological and adaptive perspectives that recognise interdependence, emergent effects and the possibility of unintended consequences.

1. Conceptual framework: complexity and the ecology of action
a) Complexity as an analytical and practical horizon
From the perspective of complex thought (E. Morin), social realities cannot be adequately understood through reductionism or isolated variables because social phenomena are organised through:
- Multicausality: factors accumulate and interact (poverty, educational trajectories, mental health, family dynamics, peer influence, neighbourhood opportunities, discriminatory processes).
- Non-linearity: small changes can have large effects and vice versa; trajectories can shift abruptly.
- Feedback loops: interventions and contexts mutually influence each other (an action changes the environment, and the new environment changes subsequent action).
- Uncertainty and incompleteness of information: decisions must often be made with partial knowledge and changing conditions.

In youth, complexity is reinforced by heterogeneity of "youth" as a social category (not only age-based, but shaped by class, gender, migration status, ethnicity, disability, territorial inequalities and digital environments), and by the coexistence of opportunities and risks (education and digital connectivity vs. precariousness, exclusion, loneliness, problematic consumption, violence, or online harms).

b) Ecology of action
Morin's "ecology of action" states that once an action is launched, it enters a web of interactions that can deviate it from its original intention, producing unexpected and even contrary effects. Therefore, socio-educational strategies must:
- Anticipate side effects and paradoxes (e.g., interventions that unintentionally stigmatise, increase control, or reduce autonomy).
- Be iterative: plan–act–observe–reformulate.
- Combine purpose with prudence: maintain direction while adapting to emerging realities.
- Prioritise learning and reflexivity over rigid application of protocols.

2. Strategic approach to socio-educational intervention under complexity
A strategy is not merely a set of activities; it is an orientation that integrates diagnosis, objectives, methods, coordination, and evaluation, assuming

uncertainty and adapting to different contexts (school, community, family, online spaces, labour insertion, protection systems). Key pillars are:

a) Complex and ecological diagnosis (shared and situated)
- Multi-level analysis (ecological approach, compatible with Bronfenbrenner): individual (skills, wellbeing), microsystems (family, peers), mesosystem (school–family relations), exosystem (services, labour market, neighbourhood resources), macrosystem (norms, policies, stigma, structural inequalities), and chronosystem (biographical transitions, critical events).
- Intersectional reading of vulnerability and opportunity: not "risk youth" as a homogeneous group, but profiles and trajectories shaped by cumulative disadvantage or by protective networks.
- Mapping resources and constraints: assessment of local capital (associational life, informal supports, cultural assets) and institutional capacities, as well as gaps and barriers.
- Participation of young people in diagnosis: incorporating experiential knowledge to avoid adult-centric problem definitions and to strengthen legitimacy and engagement.

b) Objectives oriented to capabilities, protection and participation
Under complexity, objectives must balance:
- Protection (preventing harm and guaranteeing rights) with
- Empowerment (capabilities, autonomy, agency) and
- Social inclusion (access to education, employment, housing, health, culture, and digital rights).
Rather than focusing exclusively on deficits, strategic objectives incorporate protective factors: stable bonds, meaningful participation, educational belonging, safe leisure, positive peer cultures, and access to supportive adults and services.

c) Methodological principles: adaptive, relational and context-sensitive intervention
1) Flexibility and adaptive planning
- Design actions as modular and adjustable, with decision points and contingency plans.
- Use short feedback cycles (continuous monitoring) to reformulate actions in response to changes (school conflict escalation, family crisis, policy changes, migration or housing instability).

2) Relationship-based socio-education
- Prioritise trust, recognition, and sustained accompaniment, especially for young people with experiences of institutional distrust.
- Combine clear limits and supportive presence, avoiding moralising or punitive approaches that amplify exclusion.

3) Multicomponent and multi-setting actions
Complex problems rarely respond to single-setting interventions. Effective strategies articulate actions across:
- School: engagement, mediation, anti-dropout supports, coordination with guidance and mental health resources.
- Community: youth work, cultural and sports programmes, outreach in public spaces, safe leisure, community mentoring.

- Family: parenting support, mediation, strengthening communication and routines, addressing family stressors.
- Digital environments: media education, online safety, prevention of cyberviolence and harmful content, using digital tools for support and participation.
- Labour insertion: skills development, supported employment, coordination with companies and training centres, addressing precariousness and discrimination.

4) Balancing individualised plans and collective/community intervention
- Individualised socio-educational plans respond to unique trajectories (educational, psychosocial, legal/administrative).
- Collective strategies strengthen belonging and social sustainability: peer groups, youth councils, participatory projects, community improvement initiatives.
This balance is strategic because it reduces the risk of individualising structural problems while still offering tailored support.

d) Network intervention, coordination and governance (ecology of action in practice)
In complexity, fragmented interventions increase unintended effects (duplication, contradictory messages, service fatigue). Therefore:
- Intersectoral coordination is central: social services, education, health (including mental health and addictions), justice, housing, employment services, and third-sector organisations.
- Clear protocols for referral and joint follow-up, with shared goals and defined roles, preventing gaps and overlaps.
- Network work as construction of social capital: strengthening both bonding ties (peer/family support) and bridging ties (connections to institutions, training, employment, civic spaces).
- Ethical information-sharing: proportionality, confidentiality, informed consent and safeguarding, avoiding surveillance logics that erode trust.

e) Risk management and prevention from a complex perspective
Youth "risk behaviours" should be understood as situated responses within contexts (inequality, trauma, peer norms, lack of opportunities). Strategic prevention:
- Targets risk and protective factors simultaneously, at multiple levels.
- Uses harm reduction where appropriate (especially in substance use), combined with motivational and educational approaches.
- Works on climates and environments (school coexistence, neighbourhood safety, online cultures) rather than only on individual conduct.
- Avoids stigmatizing labels; uses rights-based language and focuses on access, support and capability building.

3. Evaluation and reflexivity aligned with the ecology of action
Because actions can deviate from intentions, evaluation is not an endpoint but a steering mechanism:
- Define an explicit theory of change to clarify assumptions and identify where unintended effects may appear.
- Combine quantitative indicators (attendance, educational continuity, employment access, service utilisation) with qualitative evidence (sense of

belonging, perceived support, youth narratives, relational quality).
- Prioritise formative evaluation: continuous adjustment, learning from failures, identifying unexpected outcomes (positive or negative).
- Include participatory evaluation with young people and community actors to strengthen relevance and accountability.

4. Ethical-political orientation of strategic intervention under complexity
A strategic approach in complex contexts must be grounded in:
- Rights and social justice: understanding youth difficulties within structural determinants (inequality, discrimination, precariousness), not only personal responsibility.
- Non-stigmatization and cultural competence: sensitivity to diversity and power relations.
- Proportionality and "do no harm": anticipating harmful side effects (labelling, institutional over-control, exclusion from school, criminalisation).
- Promotion of meaningful participation: not symbolic consultation, but shared decision-making spaces where young people influence priorities, design and evaluation.

In sum, strategies for socio-educational intervention in contexts of complexity and ecology of action require systemic diagnosis, intersectoral coordination, flexible and relational methodologies, and continuous evaluation oriented to learning. The strategic focus is to sustain purposeful action while adapting to uncertainty, strengthening protective networks and social capital, and ensuring youth rights, participation and inclusion across the multiple contexts that shape their trajectories.

Question 3

Research for action: young people facing social difficulties. (Evaluating and researching for action).

STUDENT RESPONSE:

Research for action with young people facing social difficulties refers to a systematic, ethically grounded and practice-oriented process that links knowledge production to concrete transformation, combining diagnosis, intervention design, implementation and evaluation in a continuous cycle. It is especially relevant in youth social work because "youth" is not only an age category but a socially constructed stage shaped by class, gender, ethnicity, migration status, territory and institutional trajectories, and because current youth transitions are longer, more uncertain and more unequal.

1. Framing the problem: youth social difficulties in the current context
A rigorous research-for-action approach starts from a contextual and sociodemographic reading of youth realities and their unequal distribution of opportunities and risks. Typical situations of social difficulty include:
- Educational disengagement and early school leaving; low qualification and barriers to re-entry.
- Precarious employment, unemployment and NEET situations; unstable income and delayed residential emancipation.
- Poverty and material deprivation in the family or in youth-headed households; intergenerational inequality.
- Mental health problems (anxiety, depression), self-harm, loneliness, and barriers to access youth-friendly services.
- Substance use and other risk behaviours (problematic alcohol/drug use, unsafe sexual practices), sometimes linked to coping and peer dynamics.
- Exposure to violence (in the family, intimate partner violence, group violence), bullying/cyberbullying and digital risks.
- Social exclusion linked to discrimination (gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation) and to administrative vulnerability (migrant youth, unaccompanied minors transitioning to adulthood).
- Housing insecurity and homelessness, particularly in "care leavers" and young people with weak support networks.
These difficulties must be understood ecologically: as the product of interactions between individual resources, family and peer contexts, school/work institutions, neighbourhood conditions, welfare policies, and cultural norms. Research for action therefore avoids blaming individuals and instead identifies structural barriers and institutional gaps while also recognising youths' agency.

2. Research-for-action: principles and methodological positioning
Research for action is characterised by:
- Utility and transformation: generating knowledge that directly informs decisions, resource allocation and intervention improvement.
- Participation: involving young people not only as informants but as co-producers of knowledge to the greatest extent possible (participatory action research, co-design).
- Reflexivity and ecological sensitivity: recognising complexity, unintended effects, and the need to adapt interventions.
- Equity and rights-based approach: protecting minors and vulnerable youth,

ensuring non-discrimination, and promoting access to social rights.
- Interdisciplinarity and intersectorality: integrating social work with education, health, employment, justice and community actors.

Methodologically, it often uses mixed methods:
- Quantitative components: surveys on living conditions, school/work trajectories, service use; analysis of administrative data; pre/post measures of outcomes.
- Qualitative components: semi-structured interviews, focus groups, life histories, participant observation, ethnographic approaches in community settings.
- Participatory techniques: photovoice, mapping of safe/unsafe spaces, youth advisory groups, peer research, collective problem definition and prioritisation.
- Network-oriented tools: social network analysis and mapping of community assets to assess social capital and collaboration patterns.

3. The action cycle: from diagnosis to evaluation and improvement
3.1. Needs assessment and problem definition (diagnosis)
A solid diagnosis combines:
- Analysis of social determinants and local context (neighbourhood resources, school climate, labour market, housing availability, service accessibility).
- Identification of risk and protective factors at multiple levels (individual, family, peer, institutional, community).
- Mapping of existing resources and gaps in the youth protection and support system (public social services, child protection, mental health services, NGOs, youth associations, employment services).
- Segmentation without stigmatization: distinguishing profiles and trajectories (e.g., care leavers, newly arrived youth, youth in conflict with the law, LGBTQ+ youth, young women exposed to violence) to tailor responses.

Outputs of this phase should include a prioritized set of problems, a description of target groups, and explicit assumptions about what is producing the difficulties (causal hypotheses) that can be tested or refined.

3.2. Designing the intervention: theory of change and logical coherence
Research for action translates diagnosis into an intervention model with:
- General and specific objectives, explicitly linked to needs and rights.
- A theory of change (how activities lead to outputs and outcomes) and/or a logic model (inputs → activities → outputs → outcomes → impact).
- Definition of the level(s) of intervention: individual (casework), group (socio-educational groups), community (community development, youth participation), and structural (advocacy, policy and organisational change).
- Planning of coordination and referral circuits, clarifying roles between public services and third sector organisations, and ensuring continuity of care.

3.3. Implementation with monitoring (process evaluation)
During implementation, research supports adaptive management through monitoring:
- Fidelity and quality: whether the intervention is delivered as intended and with adequate professional standards.
- Reach and accessibility: whether the intended youth are participating, with attention to barriers (schedules, transport, digital divide, fear of stigma, administrative obstacles).

- Acceptability and safety: youths' perception of usefulness, trust, and respectful treatment; safeguarding incidents.
- Interprofessional coordination: effectiveness of case conferences, shared protocols, and information exchange within ethical and legal limits.

Monitoring tools include attendance records, session logs, reflective diaries, short feedback instruments, and regular team review meetings.

3.4. Outcome and impact evaluation
Evaluation must be proportionate, feasible, and aligned with the complexity of youth interventions. Key distinctions:
- Outcome evaluation: changes in participants attributable to the programme within a reasonable time frame (e.g., improved school attendance, reduced substance use, increased employment readiness, enhanced coping skills, improved social support).
- Impact evaluation: broader and longer-term changes (e.g., reduction in dropout rates at community level, lower youth homelessness, improved access to mental health services), acknowledging attribution limits.

Design options depend on context and ethics:
- Quasi-experimental designs (comparison groups, matched samples) when randomisation is not feasible.
- Pre/post designs with repeated measures, complemented by qualitative evidence to interpret change mechanisms.
- Case study evaluation for complex, multi-component interventions.
- Realist evaluation (what works, for whom, in what circumstances) to address heterogeneity of youth trajectories and contexts.

Indicators should cover:
- Objective indicators: education/employment status, housing stability, service utilisation, recidivism (where applicable), income adequacy.
- Subjective indicators: perceived wellbeing, self-efficacy, sense of belonging, perceived discrimination, satisfaction with services.
- Social capital indicators: size/diversity of support networks, trust, participation in community groups, bridging ties to institutions; these can be measured through network mapping and qualitative accounts.

4. Ethical and professional requirements in research with young people
Research for action with youth requires strong ethical safeguards:
- Informed consent/assent appropriate to age and maturity; when minors are involved, procedures must ensure both legal compliance and genuine understanding.
- Confidentiality and data protection, with clear limits related to risk of harm and mandatory reporting.
- Do-no-harm: avoiding re-traumatisation, minimising stigma, and ensuring supportive referral pathways during data collection.
- Cultural competence and anti-oppressive practice: adapting methods to language, literacy, disability and cultural norms; addressing power imbalances between professionals and youth.
- Participation with real influence: avoiding tokenism by ensuring that youth

contributions shape decisions and that results are returned to participants in accessible formats.

5. Using findings for action: learning, accountability, and network strengthening
The final step is not only producing a report but ensuring utilisation:
- Feedback loops: translating results into concrete programme adjustments (e.g., changing outreach strategies, improving coordination with schools, adapting group contents, adding mental health support).
- Accountability to stakeholders: youth, families, community, funders and institutions; transparency about limitations and unintended effects.
- Strengthening collaboration and the welfare ecosystem: using findings to improve referral pathways, shared protocols, and inter-agency governance, and to advocate for resources where structural barriers are identified.
- Sustainability: embedding evaluation capacity within services (training, shared indicators, simple monitoring systems) so that evidence-informed practice becomes routine.

In sum, research for action with young people facing social difficulties is a cyclical, participatory and ecologically informed process that integrates diagnosis, co-designed intervention, and multi-level evaluation (process, outcomes, impact). Its distinctive value lies in combining methodological rigour with ethical commitment and practical utility, while reinforcing social capital, inter-agency networks and young people's rights and participation as central levers of change.