

EMBEDDING SOCIAL JUSTICE IN FASHION EDUCATION: A CO-CREATED SECOND- HAND SEPTEMBER PARTNERSHIP MODEL.

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University of Manchester | A University of
Manchester - Oxfam partnership



The Team – Academics and student partners

Co-developed through academic–student partnership in collaboration with Oxfam.



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SOCIAL JUSTICE, SUSTAINABILITY AND PARTNERSHIP

THE PROJECT DIRECTLY CONTRIBUTES TO:

Mapping the UN SDGs

The project aligns with the University of Manchester's commitment to social responsibility and uses the UN Sustainable Development Goals as a framework for embedding sustainability, partnership and community engagement within fashion education.

- **Community engagement**
- **Second-hand fashion**
- **Student partnership**
- **Charity collaboration**
- **Circular economy practices**



SDG 11
Sustainable
Cities and
Communities



SDG 12
Responsible
Consumption and
Production



SDG 17
Partnerships
for the Goals



Why Fashion Education Must Drive Social Impact

Fashion is both a driver of **waste** and a powerful cultural language. The question for higher education is: **how do we teach sustainability without stripping fashion of its identity value?**

Environmental Crisis

- Overproduction
- Carbon emissions
- Mounting textile waste define
- the industry's ecological footprint.

Cultural Paradox

- Fashion enables identity and self-expression
- Yet remains one of the world's most polluting industries.

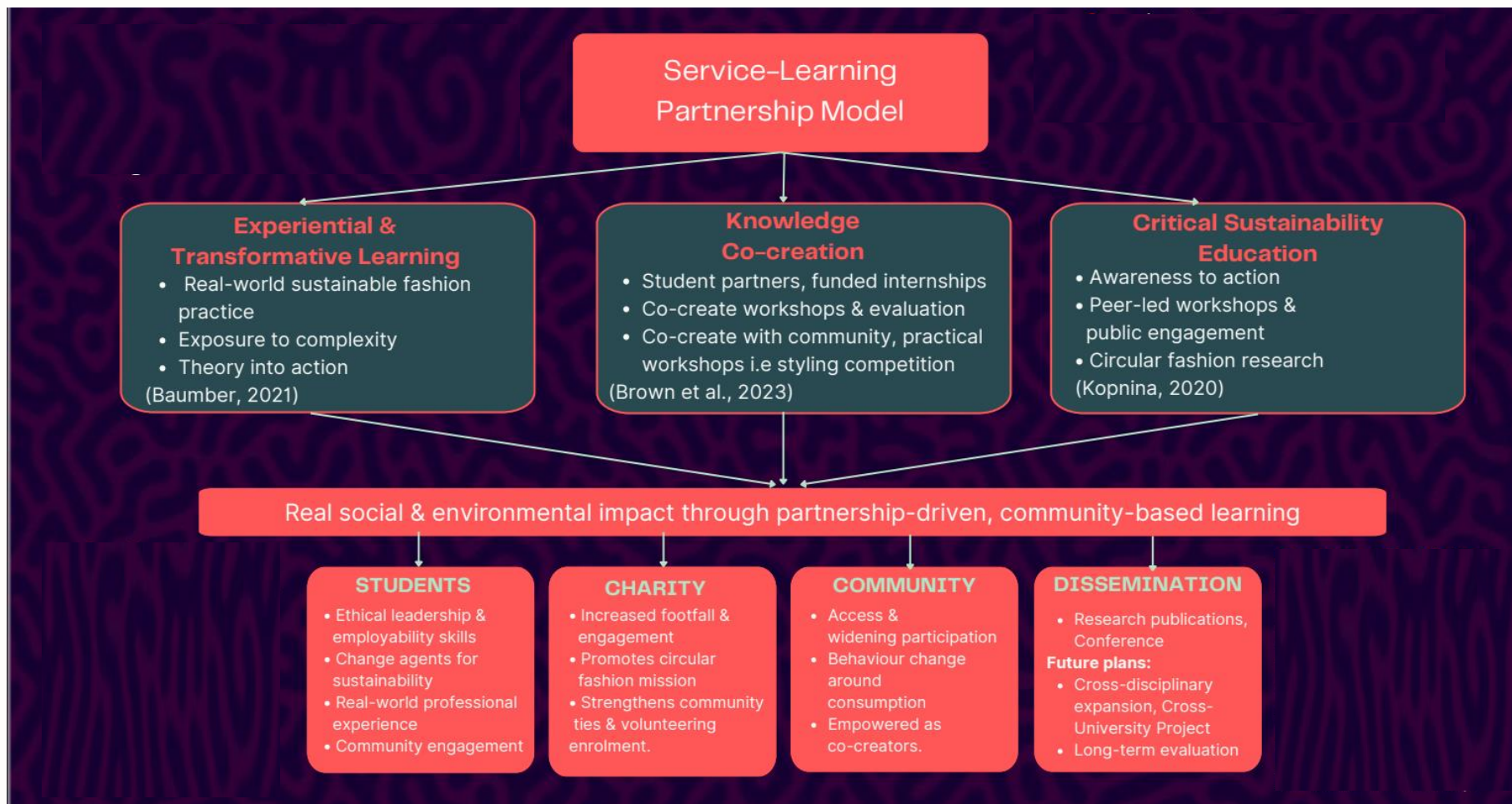
A Way Forward

Second-hand fashion sits at the intersection of circular principles, sustainability, repurposing and individual self-expression.

REIMAGINING SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION THROUGH SERVICE LEARNING

Our approach draws upon three complementary strands of scholarship:

- **Experiential and transformative learning**
- **Knowledge co-creation**
- **Critical sustainability education.**



- Service learning connects academic study with community engagement and real-world practice, enabling students to address sustainability challenges through authentic learning experiences.
- ***'Sustainable education requires transformative learning experiences rather than the simple transmission of knowledge'*** (Sterling, 2001).
- The model was operationalised through a partnership between the University of Manchester, Oxfam Superstore and local community participants..

FIG 1. Service-Learning Partnership Framework (Authors' own, 2026). Conceptual foundations informed by Baumber (2021), Brown et al. (2023), Kopnina (2020), D'Adamo et al. (2022), Machado et al. (2019) and Hur (2020).



RESPONDING THROUGH : SECOND-HAND SEPTEMBER

Second-hand fashion. Rather than asking students simply to learn about sustainability, we wanted them to experience it through partnership with **Oxfam** and the local community.

In partnership with Oxfam Superstore, Cheetham Hill, Manchester, students worked alongside community participants to:

- Explore second-hand fashion as a sustainable alternative
- Challenge stigma associated with pre-loved clothing
- Co-create styling narratives
- Promote circular economy principles
- Engage local communities in sustainability conversations
- Reduce economic and cultural barriers to participation in sustainable fashion

Designing a Community-Based Sustainability Challenge

- Developed by academic staff and student partners as part of Oxfam's Second-Hand September campaign.
- Explored how sustainability and fashion identity can coexist.
- Participants styled trend-led outfits using only donated clothing.
- Workshops challenged assumptions about second-hand fashion.
- Students and community members learned alongside one another.
- Promoted the message: *"Buy the trend without buying new."*



**DRESS FOR THE
WORLD YOU
WANT**

Shop your style in second hand

Shop now

**SECOND HAND
SEPTEMBER**

Bringing Professional Practice into Community Learning

Sam Loat

Professional Practice

Stylist and author **Sam Loat** supported the styling challenge, helping participants interpret contemporary fashion trends through second-hand clothing. He also judged the final curated looks.

1

Oxfam

Community Expertise

Oxfam Superstore provided an authentic learning environment where students and community participants engaged with sustainability challenges in a real-world retail setting.

3

Stitched Up

Third Sector Partnership

Stitched Up contributed expertise in sustainable fashion and textile skills, supporting workshop design and community engagement activities.

2



Sam Loat (He/Him) • Following
Brand Ambassador & Second
Hand Stylist
10h • 🌐

Had the absolute pleasure of helping **Aurelie Le-Normand** and **Eva Wang** with a Preloved workshop for the **The University of Manchester** last Friday 🙌. Students had to style outfits from **Oxfam** with A/W 2024 trends in mind in which a winner was chosen by myself to be showcased in the shop window. A fab example of how universities and charities can work together to promote the potential of preloved.

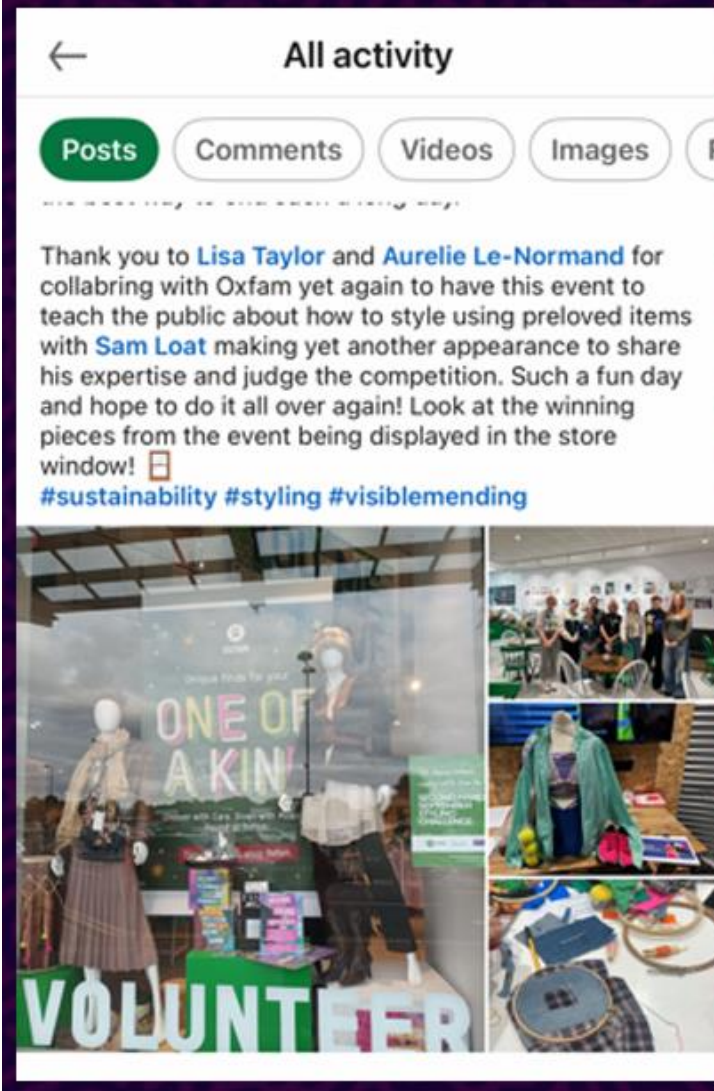


STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



Students acted as facilitators, communicators and sustainability advocates throughout the event.

COMPETITION AND CURATION



I recently had the opportunity to volunteer in the social media promotion of and on the day of the Second Hand September event at the Manchester Oxfam Superstore in Cheetham Hill which featured two styling challenges and a Stitched Up workshop. 🧵

This was a wonderful experience, especially to gain more experience in events and social media, as I consider more and more what sectors I would like to go into after graduation.

It was also a masterclass in showing that trends are circular and you can still achieve trend-led styling when shopping second hand! ♻️

[#Volunteering](#) [#EarlyCareers](#) [#Sustainability](#)



Participants translated sustainability concepts into curated fashion narratives using second-hand clothing.

Service-Learning Outcomes for Students

Through service-learning activities, students developed sustainability knowledge through co-creation, community engagement, practical experimentation and collaborative creativity.

Knowledge Co-Creation 1

Students, community participants and Oxfam staff worked together to generate knowledge about sustainable fashion, recognising multiple forms of expertise and lived experience.

Relational Learning 2

Students learned with community members rather than learning about them, developing empathy, dialogue and a deeper understanding of sustainable consumption.

Embodied Experimentation 3

Students explored sustainability through styling, curating and experimenting with second-hand garments in a real retail environment.

Collective Creativity 4

Students and community participants co-created sustainable fashion narratives through collaborative styling and discussion activities.

Student Voice

"Working with the local community helped me understand sustainability beyond the classroom."

Participant Voice

"Seeing others create outfits from second-hand clothes has inspired me." **67%** Strongly Agree, and **31%** Agree.

Rather than relying solely on our interpretation, these quotes demonstrate how participants themselves described the learning experience

COMMUNITY IMPACT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE OUTCOMES

Community Outcomes

- 30 local community participants engaged.
- Challenged stigma around second-hand fashion.
- Participants actively reframed second-hand as desirable.
- Created accessible sustainability learning opportunities.
- Learning happened through doing trying on, adapting, and expressing.
- The workshops moved beyond sustainability as information.
- Shared dialogue and co-ownership over the learning experience

Partnership Outcomes

Students, charity staff and community members were positioned as equal contributors to knowledge creation.

Strengthened relationships between the University of Manchester and Oxfam.

Established a model for future community-engaged sustainability education.

Community Voice

“It was really exciting, and I would like to attend such events in a future, thanks to all who arranged and run this workshop”

Community Voice

‘Always prefer to buy second hand but this workshop has inspired me to try different styles, putting different things together’

THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS

These findings do not stand in isolation. They also help us understand how service-learning contributes to sustainability education in higher education

Supports Existing Research

- Experiential learning strengthened students' sustainability competencies (Kamis et al., 2021).
- Reflection transformed sustainability from abstract knowledge into lived understanding (Kolb, 1984).

Extends Current Understanding

- Students developed a stronger sense of professional identity as future ethical fashion practitioners.
- Learning emerged through collaboration with community participants rather than knowledge transmission alone.

Critical Success Factors

- Reflection enabled students to connect experience with theory.
- Knowledge co-creation positioned students, community members and charity staff as equal contributors (Wenger, 1998).

Sustainability learning became **a transformative process** that shaped values, identity and social responsibility.



and participant feedback confirmed that it was an educational and unique experience. Participants now feel more confident in shopping second-hand and this is definitely the kickstart to more events in the future!

Overall, it was amazing to see my research and efforts over my summer internship come alive in the workshop, and I aim to continue on this project as a passion outside of my final year of studies. Thanks to [Aurelie Le-Normand](#) and [Lisa Taylor](#) for all the help in organising during this experience. Thank you to Zoe at Oxfam Originals for providing the space and making this workshop possible, and [Sam Loat](#) for his expert fashion skills to judge the outfits during the workshops. Finally, thank you to all the participants, I hope to see you all again in future workshops.



FROM PILOT ACTIVITY TO FUNDED INITIATIVE(2024– 2025)

From Pilot Activity to Funded Initiative

- Two Second Hand September Campaigns
- 30 participants from local community
- Secured internal funding to support **three** student internship positions.
- 3 funded student interns.
- 15 student volunteers.
- Social Responsibility Commendation 'Making a Difference Award 2026'

FROM COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP TO CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION

Embedding the Triple Nexus Across First-Year Fashion Education

- Lessons from the Oxfam partnership are now informing the **redesign of first-year core units** through a Triple Nexus approach that integrates sustainability, employability and social responsibility across the student learning journey.

Legacy of the Oxfam Partnership

- Service-learning demonstrated the value of authentic sustainability learning.
- Students connected sustainability concepts with real-world practice.
- Community partnerships created opportunities for co-created knowledge.
- Findings are now informing curriculum redesign across first-year core units.

Triple Nexus Model for Applied Sustainable Pedagogy
(Taylor, 2024; revised 2026)

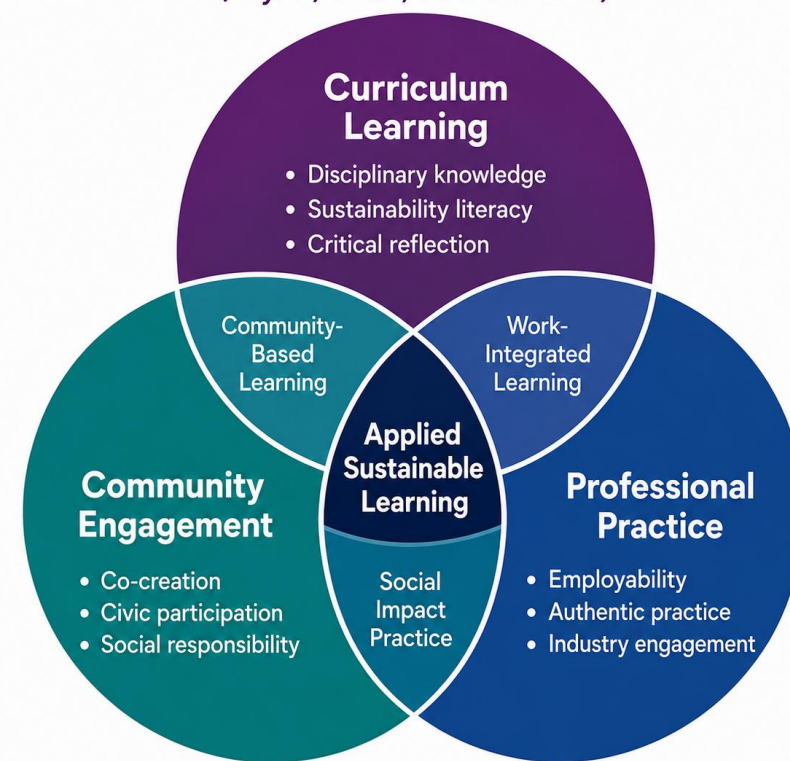


FIG 2: Triple Nexus Model for Applied Sustainable Pedagogy (Taylor, 2024; revised 2026) Developed through ongoing scholarship in sustainability education, service-learning, community engagement and curriculum innovation. The model positions applied sustainable learning at the intersection of curriculum learning, community engagement and professional practice.

Where Next? Scaling Community-Engaged Fashion Education

Future Development

Second-Hand September 2026

1

Expanding the initiative across the **Northwest corridor** through collaboration with:

- **University of Manchester**
- **Liverpool John Moores University**
- **Leeds Beckett University**
- **Oxfam**

Cross-Institutional Collaboration

2

- Sharing service-learning approaches across fashion education programmes.
- Creating opportunities for students to engage in community-led sustainability initiatives.

Research and Scholarship

3

- Continued evaluation of student, community and partnership outcomes.
- Findings have already been disseminated through international and national conference presentations.
- ***Reframing Fashion Futures: Co-Creating Sustainable Fashion Narratives with Community*** (IFFTI 2026, RMIT Vietnam)
- ***Second Hand September: Driving Social Impact through Fashion Education*** (Advance HE Teaching & Learning Conference 2026)
- Ongoing development of publications and collaborative scholarship outputs.

Long-Term Vision

4

- Transferable workshop packs for partner institutions
- Potential national roll-out across Oxfam retail sites
- Establish a replicable model for embedding social justice and sustainability within fashion education.
- Strengthen university-community partnerships through collaborative learning and public engagement.

EMBEDDING SOCIAL JUSTICE IN FASHION EDUCATION: KEY TAKEAWAYS

Key Takeaways

- Community partnerships can embed social justice within fashion education.
- Service-learning transforms sustainability from knowledge into action.
- Service-learning enables transformative sustainability education.
- Students become co-creators and change agents rather than passive recipients of knowledge.
- Community members become collaborators rather than recipients.
- Sustainable fashion education is most effective when curriculum, community and practice are integrated.

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

- **Questions for the Audience**
- What challenges do you foresee in scaling experiential learning across larger cohorts?
- Have you seen examples of sustainability education working particularly well in your own institutions or industries?
- What kinds of industry partnerships do you think would further strengthen sustainable fashion education?

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