

International Research Collaborations in Textiles & Apparel: Reflections & Best Practices

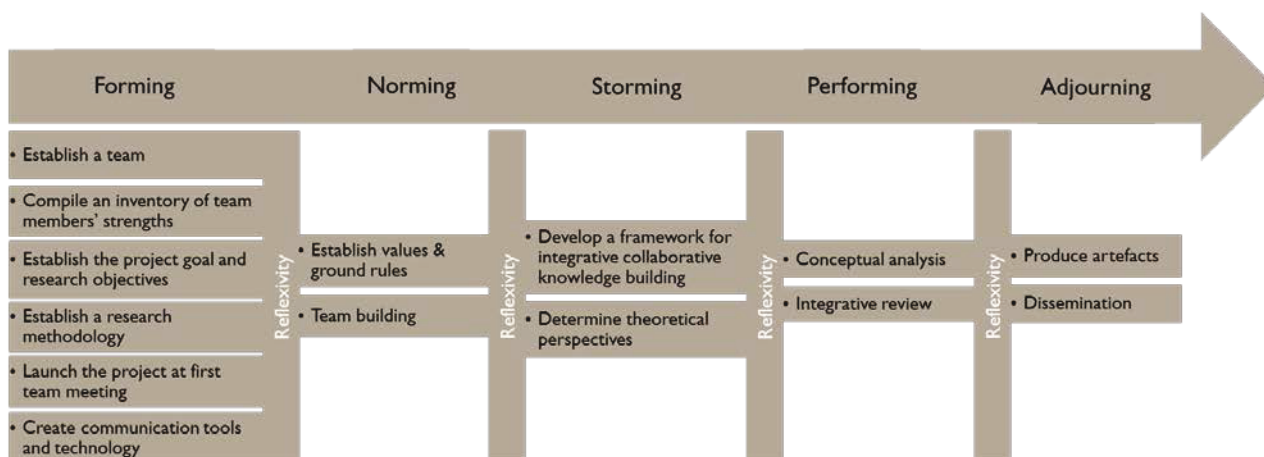
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Global Women’s Empowerment (GoWE®) is a team of academics consolidating their expertise to re-envision how scholarly activities and interest can serve the dual purpose of addressing and supporting the needs of women and girls in developing economies as it pertains to social entrepreneurship practices in the global textile and apparel (T&A) industry. The purpose of the presentation was to explore and expand a model for creating international research groups and social entrepreneurial collaborations among academics in the Textiles and Apparel (T&A) industry. Topics of discussion included (1) how to empower women and girls in developing economies; (2) envision curriculum, research and entrepreneurship from a critical theory and feminist theory perspectives; (3) developing of a credible research team; (4) maintaining team commitment; (4) overcoming challenges; (5) identifying opportunities; (6) developing and maintaining an international profile; and (6) managing large-scaled international research projects.

A process model for international research collaborations (Engelbrecht Et Al., 2016) was applied to these efforts in T&A industry and guided the discussions on:

1. Forming: How to create a shared vision and reaching consensus.
2. Norming: Developing discrete processes and practices, as well as shared values and foundational rules that lead to team building.
3. Storming: Developing a meticulous understanding of research tasks and how to accomplish tasks.
4. Performing: Identifying and incorporating theoretical perspectives and frameworks for collaborative knowledge building and concept analysis.
5. Adjourning Projects: Reflecting, finishing projects, assessments, and shifting to the next project.

Figure 1: A process model for international research collaborations.



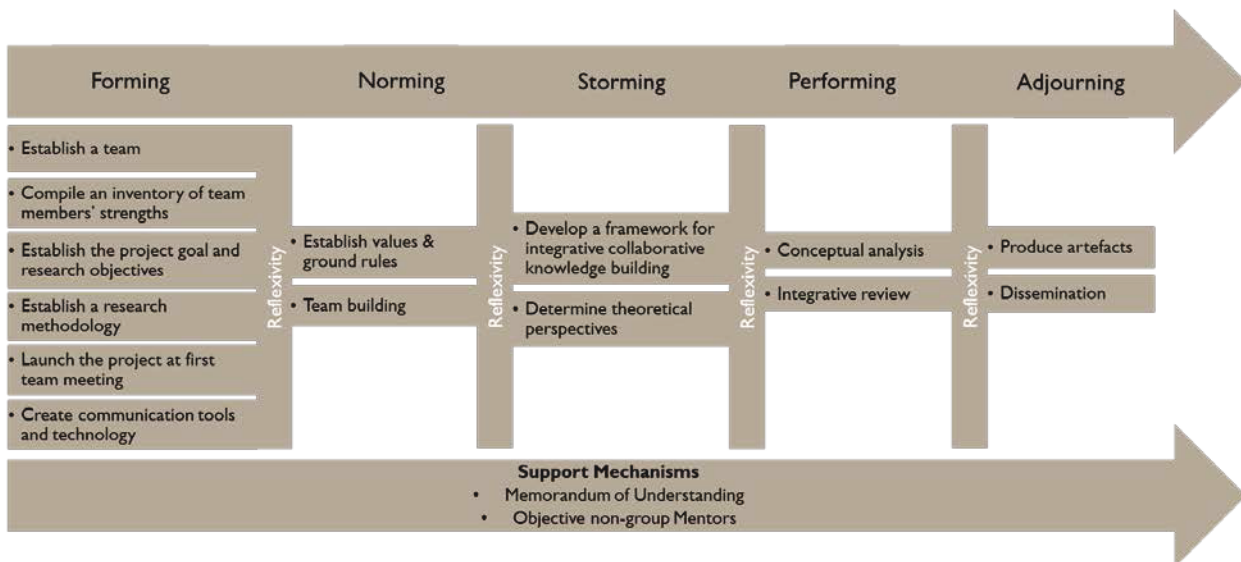
Adapted from Engelbrecht, L., Spolander, G., Strydom, M., Adaikalam, F., Marjanen, P. Pervova, I. Sicorra, A., & Tani. P. (July 1, 2016). Reflections on a process model for international research collaboration in social work. *International Social Work*, 59 (4), 438-451.

Multiple presenters from varying parts of the T&A complex shared their research experiences and international collaborations along with future endeavors. At the end of the presentation, a wrap-up discussion followed with the goal of reflecting on the “forming” process and as a foundation for “norming” the group’s efforts. The collaborative group discussed the challenges they encountered as a result of pursuing international research collaborative activities. In addressing group experiences and challenges, feedback from participants included:

1. Continuously reflecting on the forming process that includes updating the Memorandum of Understanding established by team initially, developing concrete ideas about areas of deficiency, and creating a climate that promotes open dialog about the power dynamics and intended goals.
2. Utilizing accountability measures that assist in keeping members accountable such as establishing set meeting times and dates, ‘leader’ rotations, or order of authorship expectations among members.
3. Using established grant models for group project reporting structures such as the U.S. for International Development.
4. Inviting a non-partisan, objective mentor to the group and projects to ensure accountability.
5. Collaborating with local or nationally based organizations with social perspectives to further the group’s vision.
6. Identifying commonalities across group members’ work and focus on developing these commonalities to create a framework for collaborations.

Based on the discussion finding it was established that Engelbrecht and colleagues (2016) process model for international research collaborations is a good place to start but needs to be supported by additional mechanisms that help to keep the group accountable such as developing a Memorandum of Understanding that evolves throughout the process of the collaborative efforts.

Figure 2: A process model for international research collaborations in T&A.



References:

Engelbrecht, L., Spolander, G., Strydom, M., Adaikalam, F., Marjanen, P. Pervova, I. Sicorra, A., & Tani. P. (July 1, 2016). Reflections on a process model for international research collaboration in social work. *International Social Work*, 59 (4), 438-451.