**International School Leadership Development Network**

**Study Summary**

We would like to collect information about the research studies being conducted as part of the International School Leadership Development Network. For each study you have conducted (or are conducting), please provide the following information:

1. Research team members’ names and affiliations.

Dr Sylvia Robertson

1. Which project area does your research study address?

Leadership for social justice

X Leadership in high-need schools

1. Briefly describe the study setting, participants, data collection instruments, and dates of the investigation.

Falling school rolls sometimes require the merger of several schools. In this case study, set in a small New Zealand city, an Intermediate School (pupils aged 11-13) merged with a Primary School (pupils aged 5-10). Both schools were located in a low SES area with 45% Māori and Pasifika students. The school communities were opposed to the decision to merge. The new principal was tasked with bringing together the divided school communities, while addressing the often complex needs of his students. Semi structured interviews were conducted with the principal, deputy principal, and a member of the school board of trustees. Interviews of 60-90 minutes were recorded and transcribed. In addition, observations were conducted of the principal in a variety of school settings.

Data were collected from July 2014 – December 2015

1. List key findings of the study.

This study was part of a multiple case study that aimed to show how principal identity is challenged when leading complex change processes. In this case, findings showed the principal led a successful school merger by:

* Leading change as a collaborative process
* Building strong relationships with all school stakeholders
* Setting high expectations based on shared values
* Maintaining open and transparent leadership practices

For the principal, this meant some change in professional identity. While personal beliefs and values were challenged, they remained unchanged. However, change was noted in the thinking, acting and feeling aspects of self. Greater flexibility was developed in order to adapt pace and priorities. Planning and strategic leadership skills were enhanced. New strategies for emotional management were adopted to grow resilience and meet a perceived requirement to model professionalism at all times. The ability to take some risks emerged as the principal learned to trust personal convictions and act courageously. Lastly, opportunities to critically reflect on practice were sought after and highly valued.

1. Presentations and publications reporting the study.

Robertson, S. (2017). Leading a school merger in a high needs setting. In R. McNae, M. Morrison, & R. Notman (Eds.), *Educational leadership in Aotearoa New Zealand: Issues of context and social justice* (pp.143-158).Wellington, New Zealand: NZCER Press: