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MATHS REPORT DOESN'T ADD UP

'The latest research on the state of mathematics teaching and learning released by the business group NZ Initiative, may have reached quite different conclusions had it sought critical input from education's academic and professional sector,' said Denise Torrey, President of the New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF).

The author of the report, Rose Patterson, who is qualified in marketing and psychology, used international student achievement league tables, *Trends in International Maths and Sciences (TIMSS)* and *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)* as measures by which she concluded that New Zealand children were slipping in maths performance, that the Ministry's numeracy project had failed and we needed to return to teaching basics. She further concluded that teachers lacked the capacity to teach mathematics and recommended that a teachers' certificate in mathematical competence be developed by the new education council, EDUCANZ.

'It's a huge leap to conclude that there is a causal link between an international league table ranking and the failure of a numeracy project, decline in the standards of mathematical teaching competence and decline in children's knowledge of basics,' said Torrey, 'It's an even greater stretch of credibility to suggest that New Zealand's TIMSS and PISA rankings can be lifted by introducing a certificate of mathematical competence for teachers,' she said.

'NZPF would welcome a robust study conducted by qualified professionals and academics in mathematics, to identify the benefits of on-going professional learning development opportunities for mathematics teachers,' said Torrey.

'It is much more likely that the removal of specialist expert maths advisors has impacted on students' maths results, not the removal of learning basics by rote,' she said.

ENDS

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