The Roles and Responsibilities of Nova Scotia School Psychologists in Inclusive Education

by

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DEDICATION PAGE

This thesis is dedicated to my family, who have inspired and supported me throughout my education and this thesis. Their reminder that I could accomplish anything if I took it one step at a time fuelled this project.

I want to dedicate this thesis to the wonderful team of women who have inspired me throughout my academics. Firstly, I would like to dedicate this thesis to Dr. Jean Mitchell, who inspired my love for education and greatly influenced my passion for working for students. I would also like to dedicate this thesis to Dr. Elizabeth Church and Dr. Mary Jane Harkins for their commitment and support; without their guidance and encouragement, this thesis would not have been possible.

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education is a contemporary health issue and has become a central goal of education systems and policies, influencing the roles and responsibilities of education systems and educators. Currently, in Nova Scotia, there is a lack of direction and information on school psychologists' possible roles and responsibilities in inclusion/inclusive education. In addition, there is little information in terms of research and literature that indicate the role(s) school psychologists have in inclusive education. This study aimed to understand and outline Nova Scotia school psychologists' possible roles and responsibilities. In order to outline the possible and potential roles, all Nova Scotia inclusive education documents were collected and analyzed with several factors of analysis. By examining recommendations from seven inclusion documents, several recommendations could be satisfied by the competencies of school psychologists. The frequently appearing competencies outline Nova Scotia school psychologists' possible roles and responsibilities in inclusive education.

CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

Inclusive education continues to be a crucial aspect of education in Nova Scotia, understanding how to facilitate and contribute to inclusive education should be a priority to everyone involved in the education system. Inclusion – the belief that all students should and need to be included, appreciated, and accepted and that education is a right for all (Goering, 2015) - is a crucial part of education and education systems today. There is a lack of information in Nova Scotia education policies and documents regarding the roles and responsibilities of school psychologists in inclusive education. Without this knowledge, it is difficult for school psychologists to contribute to supporting inclusive education and for training programs to prepare school psychologists to be effective in facilitating inclusive schools. Understanding how school psychologists can promote inclusive education is crucial because inclusive education has become the standard in public education systems and the central concern of most education policies. This thesis aims to outline Nova Scotia school psychologists' possible roles and responsibilities in inclusive education.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of inclusive education, an analysis of different definitions of inclusion, a brief history of inclusive education internationally and in the Canadian context, as well as identifying central concepts in inclusive education. I will then focus on inclusive education in Nova Scotia by providing details about inclusive education documents and their implications in Nova Scotia. In the following sections, there will be a description of proposed roles and responsibilities for teachers, principals, and school psychologists in inclusive education. The chapter will end with an analysis of competencies that have been identified for psychologists.

Introduction

Inclusive education has become an integral piece of education in Nova Scotia; this emphasis on inclusion education has created a priority for academic staff to understand their roles and responsibilities in facilitating inclusive schools. In Nova Scotia, there is no universal definition or understanding of inclusion and no comprehensive directives for school staff; this gap may make it difficult to provide students with meaningful inclusive education.

In this thesis, I will be using the term "students with disabilities" rather than "students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)." Terminology and language have evolved in the field throughout the history of inclusive education (Makoelle, 2020). For example, an early definition of disability described disability as a broad term defined in legal and scientific ways that encompasses physical, psychological, intellectual, and socioemotional impairments (World Health Organization, 2001). A more current definition that reflects the changes in inclusive language is from the World Health Organization (WHO) Policy on Disability (2021), which states that disability "is the outcome of the interaction between individuals with a health condition (e.g., cerebral palsy, Down syndrome or depression) and personal and environmental factors (e.g., negative attitudes, inaccessible transportation and public buildings, and limited social supports)" (10).

A second example of evolving language is "special educational needs (SEN)." An early definition of "SEN" was "Special Educational Needs (SEN)" refers to learners with learning, physical, and developmental disabilities; behavioural, emotional, and communication disorders; and learning deficiencies" (Kryszewska, 2017, 1). Currently, the definition for "SEN" reflects the change of language in inclusive education as the field of inclusive education attempts to use terms that avoid exclusivity (Nidirect, 2015). "SEN" aims to cover a broad range of students

with learning challenges and is defined as "a legal definition and refers to children with learning problems or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most children the same age" (Nidirect, 2015). The changes in definitions of disability and "SEN" demonstrate the heavy focus on language in inclusive education. Makoelle (2020) stated that "the significance of the choice of language is based on the fact that some language and terminology used in the past did not recognize the inherently exclusive nature of the concepts and words" (1). Makoelle (2020) also noted that, while there has been some shift in more inclusive language, the world is learning and changing in the process and that inclusive education will continue to evolve with time.

It is important to clarify terms because of language's important role in inclusive education: "The disability distinction is powerful in lending support to people with disabilities who face unjust treatment and the tendency to medicalize their problems" (Goering, 2015). At the same time, some scholars and researchers disagree that the term disability is empowering, because it describes individuals based on what they cannot do rather than on their abilities (Dolmage, 2005).

As outlined below, inclusive education primarily uses the social model of disability and a social justice framework to create a person-first narrative rather than the medical model, which emphasizes the individual's perceived "impairments" or "deficits." "Special Educational Needs" aligns with the medical model of disabilities, which focuses on adapting the student to suit the fixed environment and tends to be vague when describing an individual (Dolmage, 2005). "Special Educational Needs" can be ambiguous because it does not represent the individual person or their needs but rather categorizes them without a proper distinction or description of their needs (Dolmage, 2005). The American Psychological Association (2010) directs individuals to "avoid euphemisms" for disability, such as *special, physically challenged, handi-*

capable," because of the negative connotations associated with these words. As a part of the "special needs" versus disabilities language debate, scholars have and continue to argue that the term "special needs" creates a separation between persons with and without disabilities (Finkelstein & Stuart, 1996) and further isolates the individual from the rest of the population (Rucker, 2014). The use of "disability" when discussing inclusive education is meant to come from an advocacy standpoint where it has been argued that the environment should be adapted to the student (Rucker, 2014).

There are also criticisms of the term *disability*. Some scholars contend that disability facilitates a divide in people by creating and enforcing an expected norm that people with disabilities do not fit (Friedman & Owen, 2017). Friedman and Owen (2017) stated that disability comes from an ableist perspective, because it emphasizes what individuals are unable to do and what sets them apart from the "normal" or "expected." Ableism is defined as discrimination towards disabled people, describing how certain ideals and attributes are valued or not valued (Wolbring, 2008). The term disability, to some scholars, emphasize that disability is an impairment and that impairment/impaired bodies are regarded as abnormal, deviant, inferior and even sub-human (Campbell, 2008). Within a medical model of disability understanding, individuals with disabilities are subject to "a hierarchy of bodily traits that determines the distribution of privilege, status, and power" (Garland Thomson, 1997, 6). Scholars also acknowledge that disability divides individuals into categories by label (e.g., learning disabilities, physical disabilities) without providing an adequate understanding of these categories or how they are collectively influenced by cultural, political, and economic developments such as ableism (Storey, 2007). Therefore, in the disability language debate,

language has shifted to avoiding terms such as *impairment* (Friedman & Owen, 2017) which has shifted disability definitions and the understanding of disability as an area of study.

The term disability is the language used in the *Human Rights Act of Nova Scotia* (Nova Scotia Human Rights Act, 2013, 2) and the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act* (Nova Scotia Accessibility Act, 2017).

To better understand inclusive education and all the aspects that influence inclusive education, first one must understand the definitions of inclusive education.

Definitions of Inclusive Education

The term "inclusive education" has been used in multiple ways, and there is no standard or universal definition or understanding of inclusive education (Krischler, Powell, & Pit-Ten Cate, 2019). Some definitions encompass multiple different components, such as:

The importance of valuing and reflecting the diversity of student identity, including ancestry, ethnicity, gender identity, intellectual ability, and socioeconomic status in schools, and identifying and dismantling systemic barriers, is essential to inclusive education and the creation of inclusive education policies because it provides an environment that suits the students, rather than students changing to suit an environment. (United Nations, 2015, 14).

Other definitions of inclusive education focus on a specific aspect such as physical or cognitive disability, socioeconomic status, or cultural and social inclusion. Inclusive education definitions that focus on different policy and practice levels are common and can lead to multiple different and everchanging definitions of inclusion (Krischler, Powell, & Pit-Ten Cate, 2019). If past definitions of inclusion and inclusive education are compared with current definitions as advocacy and legislation progressed, the understanding of inclusive education expanded from a

focus on physical placement to include student wellbeing and an emphasis on equity. The inclusion of equity in inclusive education policies and definitions reflected an increasing focus on having a human rights perspective in inclusive education. This perspective is illustrated in the UN's *Sustainable Development Goals*, including the need to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (United Nations 2015, 14).

The *UNESCO 1994 Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action*, an influential document, incorporated two perspectives: one, education systems should have an inclusive orientation to facilitate equal access to education and two, all students should have the right to access school or access education (Qvortrup & Qvortrup 2017). The *Salamanca Statement* defined inclusive education as:

> (1) equal access to inclusive education, (2) all children learning together, regardless of individual differences among the group of children, (3) understanding and accommodating individual differences through appropriate curricula and instruction and (4) provision of support as needed within the general education system (UNESCO 1994). International documents have developed definitions of inclusion, such as the previously mentioned *Salamanca Statement* and the contributions from the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (United Nations, 2006).

Physical Inclusion

Early definitions of inclusive education focused heavily on physical inclusion, that is, on ensuring that children with disabilities were included in the physical classroom. Initially, as previously mentioned, definitions of inclusive education focused on the placement of children. Since the mid-1990s, researchers have argued for a shift to focus more on the opportunities and involvement of individuals. Ballard (1999) noted this shift by claiming that inclusive education is

about valuing diversity rather than assimilation and that placement is not the only factor in inclusive education. Conceptualizing inclusive education as more than physical placement has continued; Whitley and Hollweck (2020) stated that it is essential to note that physical placement is not synonymous with inclusion in current environments. There are degrees to inclusion, the extent to which an individual is included or excluded, including physical placement (traditional classrooms versus learning center or resource room), the social level, and finally, the psychological level (if the student perceives themselves as to being included or belonging) (Parekh, 2014).

Currently, physical inclusion goes beyond classroom placements, meaning that it is not enough for a student to be in the classroom for it to be counted as inclusive education, but rather adaptions need to be made for that student to participate in class discussions and activities and for interactions with their peers. Furthermore, an inclusive classroom or education is where all students experience a sense of belonging and social citizenship (e.g., membership, inclusion, shared power, and value) (Parekh, 2014). In addition, an inclusive classroom modifies the environment to fit the student and does not expect the student to suit the environment (Whitley & Hollweck, 2020). Physical inclusion includes removing environmental barriers (stairs, classroom setups, and in all-day alternate settings such as resource rooms or learning centres) for students to fully participate in their classroom education with their peers. Full participation comprises providing students with a positive environment that is responsive to student needs and choices and enables full participation for all students through student-focused instruction promoting personal, social, emotional, and academic goals (Inclusion Canada, 2022).

Physical inclusion is not only the physical placement of a student but also refers to the ability of the school environment to include and facilitate students' physical needs through such things as ramps for wheelchairs, equipment to participate in the gym, or accommodations to the classroom such as making sure there is enough room for wheelchairs. Accommodations in the classroom can consist of special desks or chairs, a medical teachers assistant, having an area for occupational therapy, calm down spaces in classrooms so students do not need to go to alternative settings, and accommodations for how students are expected to participate in the classroom (talkers, visuals, and alternative formatting for assignments and tests) (Parekh, 2014).

Social Inclusion

The understanding of inclusive education shifted from focusing on placements of students to identifying how students can actively participate in their education (Qvortrup & Qvortrup, 2017). Topping and Maloney (2005) stated that social inclusion in inclusive education entails having concern for people of all ages who are marginalized or considered "unproductive" and "non-participative" in society. Qvortrup & Qvortrup (2017) outlined five categories of different social arenas that are relevant to the inclusion process:

> Social arenas within the professionally organized learning community, social arenas within the classroom as a complex of interaction systems, social arenas related to, but not a formal part of the school community, social arenas related to the interpersonal relationships between children, and social arenas related to interpersonal relationships between the individual child and one or more adults, e.g., the teacher (10).

Further, Topping and Maloney (2005) stated that society is a combination of friendships, the community, education, the workplace and leisure activities, and inclusion in all of these contexts or environments is necessary for an inclusive society (2).

With the progressing emphasis on social inclusion, student-focused inclusion became increasingly critical in inclusive education as students' voices and choices in their education emphasized the foundations of inclusive principles. Student-focused inclusion in schools covers a spectrum of students, such as individuals with physical disabilities, developmental disabilities, and minorities or marginalized groups. Messiou and Kyriaki (2019) described this spectrum as "the presence, participation, and achievement of all students vulnerable to exclusionary pressures, not only those with impairments or those who are categorized as having 'special educational needs'" (25). Mittler (2000) stated that student-focused inclusion is "everyone having opportunities for choice and self-determination," (8) which means students have someone to listen to and value what they have to say, regardless of age or labels. Levels of inclusion imply that there needs to be a combination of inclusion for it to work, and this includes physical inclusion of students, the students' social participation, and addressing the individuals' sense of belonging within the community (Qvortrup and Qvortrup, 2017). For there to be meaningful inclusion, all levels of inclusion, such as physical, social, and psychological (i.e., sense of belonging), need to be fulfilled. Arenas of inclusion imply that inclusion is more than just an individual being a member of the school community but that students are also involved in arenas outside the classroom or school (i.e., clubs). A combination of levels of inclusion and arenas of inclusion in schools provide students voice and choice on opportunities to be included with options on physical placements, social participation, and community involvement to accommodate a student's sense of belonging and fulfillment (Qvortrup and Qvortrup, 2017). Social- and student-focused inclusion involves considering the needs of individual students, while making sure that their educational needs do not lead to segregation from other students.

Equity and Inclusions

Topping and Maloney (2005) stated that we need to distinguish between treating individuals equally and treating people the same and focus on providing students equity: "inclusion may mean treating individuals differently to ensure they have equal opportunities and the opportunity to maximize their potential" (2). In addition to this, Qvortrup and Qvortrup (2017) stated it is essential to understand the shifts in inclusive education definitions, such as the shift from physical placement of students with disabilities to the focus on all students within an education system and their involvement with the community and participation in their education.

Concepts of equal opportunities for inclusion are found in documents such as the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,* by UNESCO in the *Salamanca Statement*, and is reflected in the United Nations' call for "Education for All" (Topping and Maloney, 2005, 2).

Student Choice

Student choice is an integral part of inclusive education. In educational systems, *student choice* means providing students with meaningful and well-designed choices in their education which has demonstrated a positive impact across multiple educational domains and student populations (Martin, Mithaug, Peterson, Van Dyke, & Cash, 2003). *Student choice* provides students with equitable and unique opportunities to learn by seeking to provide students with options to address interests, skills, and needs (Evans & Boucher, 2015). By giving students choices or options to learn, such as multiple ways to access information, express/present knowledge, and engage in learning, teachers and academic staff can create a learning environment to meet the needs of all learners (Evans & Boucher, 2015). *Student choice* enables students to feel autonomy and free will that facilitates engagement and promotes intrinsic motivation (Evans & Boucher, 2015). A critical piece of giving students access to meaningful

choice is for teachers to provide options relevant to a student's culture, age, and values so that choices are personalized and contextualized to a student's life (Evans & Boucher, 2015): "By providing meaningful choice in the context of classroom activities, teachers can support students' autonomy and foster deep and prolonged engagement in learning" (Deci et al., 1996). By promoting *student choice*, students can feel included in their education and the school environment to develop inclusive education starting at the individual level.

Inclusive Education Definition for this Thesis

> For this thesis, I adopted the definition of UNESCO (2017), which states,
>
> Inclusive education means that all children – no matter who they are – can learn together in the same school. This entails reaching out to all learners and removing barriers that could limit participation and achievement. Disability is one of the main causes of exclusion; however, there are other social, institutional, physical, and attitudinal barriers to inclusive education. (2)

I have adopted this definition because of the focus on inclusion for all students by removing barriers to make learning accessible to everyone—facilitating participation and achievement in all aspects for all students. In addition, the UNESCO (2017) definition aligns with the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy,* the *Human Rights Act of Nova Scotia,* and the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act* definitions by promoting equity and supporting student differences for all students and will act as a consistent definition throughout this thesis.

History of Inclusive Education

It is also critical to understand the evolution of inclusive education, as advocacy and research in inclusion have considerably shifted the pedagogy, language, and implications of inclusive education. It is vital to note the progression as it has affected educational policies, school structures, and student well-being.

International Influence

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which stated that education is a right for all children, laid the foundation for the right to inclusive education. The document noted that everyone is entitled to rights no matter their "race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status," and "education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" (1948, 7). At that point, children's education rights did not mean that all children had the right to be included in educational environments (Stubbs, 2008, 11). As described above, the *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action* (1994) first emphasized the core principle of educational inclusion, that schools need to change and adapt to accommodate students (Stubbs, 2008, 11). The *Salamanca Statement* (1994) stated that all children have unique interests, characteristics, abilities, and learning needs and that education services should consider and adapt to these diverse characteristics and needs.

Although the *Salamanca Statement* (1994), is the most referenced international declaration regarding inclusive education, other relevant international documents include the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), *World Declaration for Education for All* (1990), *Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disability* (1993), and the *Dakar Framework for Action* (2000).

Canadian Context

      Canada made significant progress from the 1950s to the 1990s regarding inclusion in education systems, moving from segregation to integration, mainstreaming, and present-day inclusive education. In the 1960s, advocacy groups in Canada raised concerns about the ineffectiveness of segregated special education services because of the lack of integration in the classroom and separation from peers. They began to advocate for inclusive education based on rights-based theories (Vaughn and Schumm, 1995). These groups recommended that schools change from segregation of students with "special education needs" to integrating these students into the mainstream classroom (Ainscow, 1999). In the beginning, schools for students with disabilities were separate from public mainstream schools and were referred to as segregated schools. The rationale for segregated schools was that they could better support students' specific needs and disabilities. Educators and policymakers thought it would be more efficient to teach in separate schools and provide the students with educational and psychological interests deemed to fit them (Ainscow, 1999). Currently, segregation can still happen within mainstream public schools where students with a wide range of disabilities are placed in a designated, self-contained classroom. In Canada, these kinds of classrooms are commonly referred to as special education classrooms, learning centres, or resource classrooms (Ainscow, 1999). Segregation, integration, and mainstreaming are vital terms in inclusive education and have influenced the inclusive education movement historically and currently through policies and advocacy.

      The integration-mainstreaming period in Canada was in the 1970s-1980s and focused on identifying students with "exceptional" needs and having those students receive individual programming in special education classes or through accommodations. In the 1970s, the *One Million Children report* (1970) called for Canada to stop segregating children with disabilities

from their peers. The report's authors, Denis Lazure and C. A. Roberts argued that for Canada to have a successful education system, educators and teachers should receive "training and supportive remedial service for both teachers and children with disabilities" (Towle, 2015, 7). When the *One Million Children report* (1970) was released, "10–15% of the child population in Canada (between 840,000 and 1,260,000 children) had an emotional or learning disorder" (Towle, 2015, 7). In addition, the *One Million Children report* (1970) pinpointed how attitudes and beliefs can affect children. The report argued that caring professions such as education could have beliefs and values that affect the outcome of a child's experience in the classroom, such as being included or excluded from their education and peers (Towle, 2015). The authors stated that a child with a disability should not be treated as a label or diagnosis but rather as a person.

Integration

Barton (2003) stated that *"integration"* refers to the process of transferring students with disabilities from special schools to mainstream schools. This process allowed these students *"to fit in"* to the classroom setting and school environment. The overall results of the process became assimilation, which meant students had to fit themselves into classroom learning environments and attitudes rather than these aspects adapting to the students (Barton 2003). Geoff (2007) stated that *integration* may be viewed as a child adapting to a school, while inclusive education may refer to the school adapting to meet the needs of actual (and potential) students. However, Geoff (2007) stated that this distinction is not always clear in practice or implementation. In integrated classrooms or schools, students with disabilities may spend some time in general education classrooms with students without disabilities and the other part of the day in a *segregated* environment, like a resource classroom. In contrast, inclusive classrooms

focus not only on the student's placement but also on arranging social spaces, opportunities, and access (Winzer, 2009).

Segregation

Jupp (1992) argued that "*integrated*" classrooms could sometimes actually function as segregated classrooms. That is, students placed in mainstream or integrated classrooms may be isolated from the rest of the class and not truly "*integrated*" within the group, for example, if they work with a support worker in one-to-one sessions for much of each day. Integrated placements, therefore, may still leave the pupil "segregated" (Jupp, 1992). It is partly for these reasons that Jupp (1992) argued that the term "inclusion" had become a more usual way of describing the extent to which a pupil was categorized as having "special educational needs (SEN)" and was genuinely "*integrated.*" In this sense, Jupp (1992) referred to inclusive education as the extent to which a school or community welcomed pupils with "SEN" as full members of the group and valued them for their contributions. This implied that for inclusive education to be "effective," all pupils must actively belong to, be welcomed by, and participate in a mainstream school and community.

Mainstreaming

According to Kargin (2004), with mainstreaming or mainstream education, students with disabilities and typically developing students are jointly educated. The *"mainstreaming" model* offers a model of service that includes three elements: a continuum of types of services for students with disabilities, a reduction in the number of children *"pulled out"* of regular classes, and the increased provision of special services within regular classrooms rather than outside of regular classrooms (Smith, 1998). *Mainstreaming* should not be considered a physical placement in the same class as typically developing peers but rather the student's access to

education (Kargın, 2004). When done correctly, *mainstream education* allows students with disabilities to be in the same classroom as their typically developing peers and receive the support of special education (Kargın, 2004). Sucuoğlu and Özokçu (2005) stated that the "main purpose of allowing children with special needs to receive the same education as children without special needs is to meet their social and emotional needs by integrating them with their peers academically and socially" (5). The term *mainstreaming* has continued to be used in schools and education systems, although inclusion is becoming more common used internationally.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

In 1982, Canada adopted the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and "made history as the first country in the world to include the rights of people with disabilities in their constitution" (Schneider & Harkins, 2009, 278). *The Charter of Rights and Freedoms* changed the treatment of individuals with disabilities within education systems. Specifically, *Section 15* transformed disability rights as the primary guarantor of minority rights, alongside federal and provincial human rights codes. *Section 15* (1), Equal Rights (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982) states:

> Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability (3).

The *Charter* is a powerful legal tool highlighting and protecting Canada's struggles and rights for individuals with disabilities.

Several legal cases/challenges clarified different aspects of *Section 15*. Legal cases

included the *Andrews case* (1989), which demonstrated that the definition of discrimination must

include the unintentional effects of legislation that fails to consider a designated group's

circumstances. A second legal case (Meieron,1999) validated that the burden of proof in a

discrimination case lies not with the complainant but with the alleged discriminator (usually the

employer). *Eaton* (1997) and *Eldridge* (1997) were two more critical legal cases. They affirmed

the use in the law of the social model of disability, accounting for the impact of context on the

definition of disability. *Eaton* (1997) reinforced the presumption in favour of integration vs.

segregation. Both *Granofsky's* (2000) and *Martin/Laseur's* (2003) legal cases further refined the

definition of disability (The Charter in the Classroom). Specifically, in Nova Scotia, the Elwood

(1987) legal case created a precedent in that it demanded the right for students with disabilities to

be allowed to be educated in their catchment area schools rather than be forced to attend

segregated schools.

  Charter interpretations based on disability rights suggest that adjusting and adapting to

students' needs ensures that students receive an education that meets their requirements while

building understanding and tolerance in the school body. Interpretations of the *Charter*, *Section

15*, through the lens of disability rights, stated that teachers must address the needs of

accommodating students and disabilities, including providing additional resources, learning

approaches, or facilities and give due regard to the requirement of accommodation to the student.

The teacher must then consider how a particular policy, action, or rule will affect students with

disabilities and try to find a way to accommodate the individual circumstances of disadvantaged

students (Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Section 15).

Educators and educational staff must create an environment that focuses on the child's best interest, as suggested through an inclusive education/disability rights lens. Section 15 interpretations through disability rights can be used as an leverage to promote inclusive education in classrooms across Canada, because this section provides teachers with legal responsibilities to promote and protect all students, regardless of their needs (McColl et al., 2016).

In summary, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Canadian educators recognized flaws within the special education approaches, such as long delays, cost, and eligibility requirements (Suleymanov, 2015). In the last few decades, school districts within the provinces and territories across Canada have generally adopted inclusive education, which became considered the best framework to address the learning needs of all students (Suleymanov, 2015). Education in Canada is a provincial area of responsibility, and because of jurisdictional differences, there is a range of models for inclusive education across the country (Suleymanov, 2015, 10). It is important to note that each province regulates education in Canada; therefore, inclusive education policies and documents are unique to each province. Consequently, it is critical to understand inclusive education in the Nova Scotia context to determine the possible roles and responsibilities of Nova Scotia school psychologists in inclusive education. The following section will outline how inclusive education has developed in Nova Scotia.

Inclusive Education in the Nova Scotia Context

The Education Act of Nova Scotia (1996) stated that academic staff and teachers had to "acknowledge and, to the extent reasonable, accommodate differences in learning styles" and "participate in individual program planning and implement individual program plans, as required, for students with special needs" (Nova Scotia House of Assembly, 1996, *Education Act* section 26, c and g). *The 1999-2000 Public School Program* described student planning as needing to be adapted to meet the learning/educational needs of students in all grades (Nova Scotia Public School Plan, 1999-2000). Schneider and Harkins (2009) stated that teachers under these Acts (1996) were "required to: involve the parents in developing Individual Program Plans (IPP), to form transdisciplinary School Program Planning Teams, and to form an Individual Program Planning Team for each student on an IPP" (282). These planning teams included school psychologists, teachers, learning support teachers, and administration.

Nova Scotia does not have a universally used definition for inclusive education. Njie et al. (2018) described that the slow progression of inclusive education in Nova Scotia was due, in part, to the lack of clarity and consistency in Nova Scotia's definition and implementation of inclusive education. Njie et al. (2018) states that "For many years, the policies, procedures, and terminology for inclusive education have been interpreted and applied differently from school to school and region to region" (9). The lack of a uniform understanding of inclusive education and its implementation negatively affected students, parents, and teachers. The negative impact created missed opportunities for collaboration and partnerships between students, families, educators, and supporting agencies (Njie et al., 2018).

The Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC) report on education was released over 25 years ago (1994) and described the exclusion, inequities, and systematic barriers in society and specifically in the Nova Scotia education system for Black students. *The BLAC Report* (1994) examined the significant issues in Nova Scotia's educational environment, specifically, a disconnect between the African Nova Scotian experience and the lack of effective policies for their needs. The report recommended the need for multicultural/anti-racism policies, access to higher education and financial support, and diverse learning and teaching materials that reflect multiculturism (The Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994). The *BLAC Report* (1994) presented a holistic approach to parents' concerns about black learners and students in the province and addressed the discrimination and exclusion of these students (Whitley & Holleweck, 2020). One of the recommendations in the *BLAC Report* (1994) was to monitor the policies made and enforced by the Department of Education. The recommendations in the report emphasized a firm commitment to an anti-racist and multi-racial educational policy/policies and direct strategies for change and inclusion of marginalized groups. Since the *BLAC Report* (1994), many procedures and frameworks have been instituted to improve outcomes for African Nova Scotian students through curriculum, instruction, assessment, and leadership, such as providing diverse texts, focusing on equity by supporting success for historically marginalized students, and honouring and respecting each student's cultural identity (Whitley & Holleweck, 2020). Some of the recommendations, such as mobilization and training for parents and collaboration with communities in resolving disciplinary problems, have been considered while making inclusive education policies. However, several recommendations are still outstanding.

In 2018, Avis Glaze was commissioned by the Nova Scotia government to provide recommendations for improvements within a student-centred education system in areas of roles, responsibilities, and administration structure. A commission was appointed by the provincial government and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union with the legislative mandate to:

Provide a research-based overview of the current practice and policy of inclusive education concerning students in the public schools operated by each school board in the province. Conduct a comprehensive literature review of inclusive education and identify the challenges educators face in implementing inclusive education, … identify potential areas of improvement in provincial and school board policies related to inclusive education and identify and recommend best practices for the implementation of inclusive education after conducting a provincial, national, and international research review (Glaze 2018, 3).

The *Raise the Bar* report (2018) provided recommendations on processes and management structure for administration, decision-making for efficient use of resources, and strengthening service delivery to students and their families. Glaze's report, "*Raise the Bar: A Coherent and Responsive Education Administrative System for Nova Scotia"* (Glaze, 2018*),* contained twenty-two recommendations which were organized in six main catalysts, each of which she said was *essential* for supporting education in Nova Scotia:

Catalyst 1: Organize the system to focus on student learning and achievement; Catalyst 2: Concentrate needed resources into classrooms and schools; Catalyst 3: Make the system better for teachers and principals; Catalyst 4: Increase trust, accountability, and transparency; Catalyst 5: Ensure equity and excellence in all schools across the province;

Catalyst 6: Streamline the department's administration and operations and invest savings in the classroom (Glaze, 2018, 23).

The *Raise the Bar* report (2018) focused on equity and excellence for all education community members, expanding beyond students with identified disabilities to include populations at risk of under-achievement and exclusion, such as immigrant and refugee populations, African Nova Scotians, students growing up in poverty, Mi'kmaq communities, and gender-related minorities (Whitley & Hollweck, 2020). *The Raise the Bar report* (2018) was consequential because it provided recommendations for the system to work well and deliver the maximum benefit to Nova Scotian Students and rid the centers of education of conflicting priorities and unclear responsibilities or roles (Whitley & Hollweck, 2020).

Following the *Raise the Bar* report (2018), the provincial government constituted a Commission whose mandate was to improve inclusive education through research, policy reform, and public consultation. The Commission examined provincial, national, and international reports, research studies, and policies and partnered with university researchers to study critical aspects of inclusive education. The report they produced, *Students First Report* (2018), outlined a comprehensive strategy for ensuring all Nova Scotia students access the education system (Njie et al.et al., 2018). The Commission made significant recommendations for a shift in funding to require educational systems to provide full support for students with disabilities (Njie et al.et al., 2018). Moreover, the Commission also recommended additional core funding for new teaching positions such as behaviour and autism support positions and other specialties such as guidance counsellors, school psychologists, speech-language pathologists, and educational assistants (Njie et al.et al., 2018).

The Inclusive Education Policy (2019) was created by the Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD), in consultation with multiple groups, and was made public in August 2019. The policy was developed from the findings and recommendations made by the *Students First report* (Njie et al.et al., 2018) and the history and context of Nova Scotia education (Whitley & Hargreaves, 2020). Policy implementation came into effect in September 2020. The policy opened with the statement:

Inclusive education is a commitment to ensuring a high-quality, culturally, and linguistically responsive and equitable education to support the well-being and achievement of every student. All students should feel that they belong in an inclusive school—accepted, safe, and valued—so they can best learn and succeed (Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy, 2019b, 1).

The *Inclusive Education Policy* (2019) aimed to "acknowledge the importance of students' well-being and its impact on their achievements. Additionally, the policy stated a second aim which was to provide," processes and structures that are student-centred, collaborative, and appropriate" (Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy, 2019b, 1). The objective stated in the policy is for all students to access an equitable and high-quality education centred on acceptance, support, cultural diversity, respect, and responsiveness to value and support diverse abilities and learning. The Nova Scotia Provincial Regional Centres for Education each created their own inclusive education plan, which came into effect in September 2020 (Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy, 2019b, 1).

Nova Scotia Human Rights Act

Another critical document to consider is the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act* because of its emphasis on protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities. The purposes of the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act* are to:

(a) recognize the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family; (b) proclaim a common standard for achievement of basic human rights by all Nova Scotians; (c) recognize that human rights must be protected by the rule of law; (d) affirm the principle that every person is free and equal in dignity and rights; (e) recognize that the government, all public agencies and all persons in the Province have the responsibility to ensure that every individual in the Province is afforded an equal opportunity to enjoy a full and productive life and that failure to provide equality of opportunity threatens the status of all persons; and (f) extend the statute law relating to human rights and provide for its effective administration" (*Human Rights Act*. R.S., c. 214, s. 1., 2)

The Nova Scotia Human Rights Act has several protected characteristics, and the *Act* prohibits harassment and discrimination based on any of the following characteristics in all areas of public life:

age, race, colour, religion, creed, ethnic, national, or aboriginal origin, sex (including pregnancy and pay equity), sexual orientation, physical disability, mental disability, family status, marital status, source of income, irrational fear of contracting an illness or disease, association with protected groups or individuals, political belief, affiliation or activity, gender identity and gender expression (*Human Rights Act*. R.S., c. 214, s. 1.)

The Perceived section of the document defines disability as:

"physical disability or mental disability" means an actual or perceived (i) loss or abnormality of a psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function, (ii) restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity, (iii) physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement, including, but not limited to, epilepsy and any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, deafness, hardness of hearing or hearing impediment, blindness or visual impediment, speech impairment or impediment or reliance on a service dog as defined in the Service Dog Act, a guide dog, a wheelchair or a remedial appliance or device, (iv) learning disability or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language, (v) condition of being mentally impaired, (vi) mental disorder, or (vii) dependency on drugs or alcohol (*Human Rights Act*. R.S., c. 214, s. 1., 4).

It is important to mention the *Act* contains a section, *Race Relations, Equity and Inclusion.* This section exists because the established decisions from *Section 15* influence inclusive policies and documents. The *Race Relations, Equity and Inclusion* section, under the direction of the Manager of Race Relations, Equity and Inclusion, as stated by the Commission, develops, and recommends inclusive programs and policies to eliminate barriers, assist Government and Government departments in developing policies, and monitors implementation of policies (*Human Rights Act*. R.S., c. 214, s. 1., 9).

Nova Scotia Accessibility Act

The *Accessibility Act of Nova Scotia* came into effect in 2017, and Nova Scotia became the third Canadian province to adopt accessibility legislation. The *Accessibility Act*, in alignment with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and *the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*,

recognized accessibility as a human right. The Government of Nova Scotia's commitment plan was meant to ensure that the province find ways to respect differences and remove barriers for individuals with disabilities (Nova Scotia Accessibility Act, 2017). In addition, the commitment plan was created to ensure independence, autonomy, and dignity for individuals with disabilities, and provide equitable opportunity, access, and promote the elimination of discrimination (Nova Scotia Accessibility Act, 2017). The *Accessibility Act* plan was created through collaboration with multiple Government of Nova Scotia departments, from community engagement sessions, discussions with employees with disabilities and Nova Scotia Disability Employee Network (NSDEN) (Nova Scotia Accessibility Act, 2017). The proposed purpose of the act was to "achieve accessibility by preventing and removing barriers that disable people with respect to; the delivery and receipt of goods and services, information and communication, public transportation and transportation infrastructure, employment, the built environment, education, and a prescribed activity or undertaking" (Nova Scotia Accessibility Act, 2017, 3, 4). A second purpose of the act was to "provide for the involvement of persons with disabilities, the public sector and other stakeholders in the development of accessibility standards" (Nova Scotia Accessibility Act, 2017, 3, 4).

The focus for this thesis is Act's education and built environment sections for this thesis, because both are relevant for school and students in Nova Scotia and will affect inclusive education because schools will be required to meet the Act's recommendations. The built environment section states, "Standards in this area will address how to make buildings, streets, sidewalks, and shared spaces accessible to all. These standards may address gaps in current regulations" (Access by Design, 2017, 8). The education section states "Standards in this area will help create learning environments in which all students can participate. These standards

could address how students with disabilities get the instruction and learning materials they need. The standards will apply to primary, secondary, and post-secondary education" (Act Access by Design, 2017, 8). This Act is intended to ensure fair and equitable access to education for students and provide a framework for academic staff, students, parents, and paraprofessionals to follow for roles and responsibilities and a framework for advocacy. This Act provides directives that could influence inclusive education documents in the coming years, so it is crucial to understand the purpose, standards, and recommendations as it may lend some understanding of the roles and responsibilities of Nova Scotia school psychologists in inclusive education now and in the future.

Medical Model and Social Model of Disability

As noted above, some conceptualizations of inclusive education are based more on a medical model of disability and others on a social model of disability. The medical model of disability involves viewing disability as a problem in the individual. The expectation is that the individual requires care or treatment to "fix" their disability or "approximate" normal functioning or measures to aid the person in adapting and learning to function despite their disability (Silvers, 1998). In the medical model, the term "impairment" is often used and refers to an abnormality of the body, such as a restriction or malfunction of a limb (American Medical Association, 2001).

Disability scholar Liz Crow (1996) stated that the medical model of disability considers an individual's disability as functional impairments or limitations and places the disability before the person. Crow (1996) stated that this form of thinking is the root of disadvantages experienced by disabled individuals because the individual becomes second to their disability. Further, a disability-first, rather than person-first, perspective disadvantages an individual because it is

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assumed they can be fixed by a cure or treatment (Crow, 1996). It should be mentioned here that person-first language is not universally accepted as some individuals prefer disability first. It is critical to take into consideration students' and individuals' choice of language to create an inclusive environment.

Although there may be a "cure" or treatment for some disabilities, some disabilities have no treatment and are lifelong. Rather than thinking of "cure" or "no cure" methods, it should be considered that there is more to understanding disability than a focus on a "cure." Society should take a closer look at definitions of disabilities to understand the disadvantages created by society through those definitions (Goering, 2015). Society can recognize what can be done to support individuals with disabilities by looking at the person first and use person-first language; society can recognize and advocate for inclusion rather than trying to "fix" people (Goering, 2015). Society can meet people where they are and promote unity no matter a person's capabilities.

One advantage to the medical model is that it provides educational staff with the ability to organize information for students' needs and provide a label for the student that allows the school to distribute and evaluate resources and provide the necessary requisites to receiving services (Nes & Stromstad, 2003). In these situations, the medical model is an essential piece in a student receiving support or services: the label or diagnosis enables the student to receive the support or programming needed to succeed (Nes & Stromstad, 2003). At the same time, the medical model, with its heavy focus on labels, present several issues, "including implying that all individuals with the same disability require the same resources, adaptations, or learning needs" (Nes & Stromstad, 2003, 118).

There have been several criticisms of the medical model or medical understanding of disability. One prominent criticism is that the medical model supports assessments driven by the

need to give or not give a student a disability label, which is often irrelevant and unrelated to a child's instructional needs (Triano, 2000). A label-driven assessment process may also not provide helpful information for developing appropriate interventions and supports for the student's education (Triano, 2000). Ahearn (1993) argued that when assessments are done to establish eligibility, it often serves to deflect limited resources from the more critical task of determining an individual's educational needs. Another criticism is that the medical model implies that it can "fix" students (Triano, 2000). A focus on fixing a student implies that they have something wrong with them, rather than focusing on the socially constructed barriers that students face within the education system. The expectation is that the individual requires care or treatment to "fix" their disability or "approximate" normal functioning or measures to aid the person in adapting and learning to function despite their disability (Silvers, 1998). Crow and Morris (1996) stated that the assumption inherent in the medical model of disability is that "a person's functional limitations (impairments) are the root *cause* of any disadvantages experienced, and these disadvantages can therefore only be rectified by treatment or cure" (2). For both students with and without disabilities, fixing the student will not fix an education system that does not meet the diverse needs of the student population (Triano, 2000).

Although education systems, educational staff, and researchers view some diagnostic labels as helpful to individuals' education and their needs, as mentioned above, it can hinder an individual's ability to connect with others and their peer's perception of them (Goering, 2015). As noted above, the medical model can make individuals second to their disability because of the label they are given, which can lead to students feeling ostracized or emphasized as different or only recognized by their disability within their environment. The medical model of disability involves viewing disability as a problem in the individual; the implications of that view cause

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individuals with disabilities to report exclusion, pressure to fit the norms, and feeling undervalued (Goering, 2015). Further, the medical model's understanding of disability has caused individuals with disabilities to say that they are treated in some cases as being globally incapacitated and feel frustration when met with pity or treated differently from their peers (Goering, 2015). The medical model's emphasis on diagnosis and labels created environments that place expectations, attitudes, and norms on individuals with disabilities. Goering (2015) stated that for individuals with disabilities, the main disadvantage does not come from their disability but rather from the unwelcoming environment in terms of institutional norms and social attitudes that exclude or denigrate them (Goering, 2015).

As an alternative to the medical model of disability, scholars, and disability activists in the 1970s and 1980s proposed a social model of disability that distinguishes between disability and impairment (Goering, 2015). In an early conceptualization of the social model, Oliver (1996) stated that "Within the social model, impairment is understood as a state of the body that is nonstandard, defined as a lacking part of or all of a limb or having a defective limb, organ or mechanism of the body" (22). Rather than expecting all the changes to occur at the individual level, the social model focuses on changing the interaction between the individual and society: "When society changes, the issues of a person with a disability disappear" (Goering, 2015, 2). The social model's goal is to examine the environment and structural changes that can be changed to include individuals with disabilities (Goering, 2015).

Further, the social model of disability looks at attitudinal obstacles people face with bodies that do not fit the "norm" because these factors influence how structures and institutional norms are created and facilitated. If structures and institutions are built on presumptions of disability performance, it can create further problems (Goering 2015). Disability performance is

the preconceived notion of what a disability should look like; when disability is portrayed in a negative light, feelings of shame or pity are conveyed by or through professionals, media, and the community (Goering, 2015). Further, inspirational stories of people with disabilities accomplishing everyday tasks or of non-disabled people extending common decency towards people with disabilities conveys a message of low expectations of people with disabilities and can further limit their opportunities (Goering, 2015). The social model was, and is, used to advocate and, in turn, aids the disability rights movement by committing to driving social change. Crow (1996) described that "the social model of disability has played a central role in promoting disabled people's individual self-worth, collective identity, and political organization. I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that the social model has saved lives" (207). The social model of disability has changed policy creation and impacted laws by placing the person first. The belief is that society should value diversity rather than disadvantage students for it (Mittler, 2000). One of the original foundations of the social model was the focus on needs, and this resulted in the movement toward education and social models of disabilities that acknowledge that students' educational difficulties are dependent on the educational context where the child is situated, paired with the type/quality of teaching the students to receive. This concept means the social model includes the inside and outside of the child (Mittler, 2000), which focuses on a person's first perspective and not thinking of a person in isolation, but rather on an individual's environment, development, and social development.

Multi-tiered Systems of Support

As noted above, the *Students First report* (2018) recommended that the education system in Nova Scotia implement inclusive education within the framework of the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). MTSS is "an evidence-based model of education that employs data-based

problem-solving techniques to integrate academic and behavioural instruction and intervention"
(Gamm et al., 2012, p. 4). It is a prevention-oriented delivery of services to students in a
framework that aims to meet the needs of every student and promote school-wide reform to the
school culture (Wexler, 2017). MTSS, as a model, is designed to directly address the social,
emotional, behavioural, and academic development of students and aims to integrate a
continuum of systemwide strategies, resources, structures, and practices that provide a
responsive and comprehensive framework to combat barriers for student learning (Bender,
2009). Further, MTSS acknowledges that contextual issues and instructional issues rather than
student ability could be why students have problems in learning (Bender, 2009). MTSS
integrates a continuum of supports and organizational structures to support the continuous
removal of systemic challenges and barriers that counter students' success (Bender, 2009).
Supports include home-school-community relationships, mental health and recreational services,
and cultural domains, paired with school- and district-level leadership to promote student first
frameworks (Bender, 2009). MTSS is structured in three tiers. The first tier (Tier 1) services are
intended to deliver universal support for all students; this happens at the classroom level paired
with a universal core curriculum and core instruction. Tier 2 services are interventions for
students who continue to have problems after universal instruction. Tier 2 services provide
supplementary interventions for some students in small groups. Tier 3 services are for the
students who did not benefit from universal instruction and small group support. Tier 3 supports
are provided individually, and there are intensive interventions with specialists (Forman et al.,
2012). Intervention intensity increases from Tier 1 to Tier 3. Students are not required to be in
the same tier for their entire education; they can move through the tiers and be within different
tiers across academic subjects, behavioural, and social-emotional needs (Wexler, 2017).

In addition to the tiers, there is an emphasis in MTSS on screening and progress monitoring procedures (Forman et al., 2012). The screening and monitoring determine the effectiveness of instruction at each tier and data collection on student progress within a monitoring schedule. MTSS is intended to enable educators and administration to use problem-solving models to evaluate the data and make informed decisions for intervention, planning, and instruction (Gresham, 2007). Eagle et al. (2015) stated that "The basis for MTSS reform efforts is multifaceted and predicated upon theoretical, empirical, and practical considerations" (161). This kind of system-level change requires understanding the components associated with the evidence-based program, interdisciplinary approaches, and effective implementation practices (Eagle et al., 2015). To achieve a change with MTSS, Fixen et al. (2005) stated that there are three drivers needed: "(a) competency drivers (i.e., selection, training, coaching, and performance evaluation), (b) organization drivers (i.e., systems intervention, facilitative administration, and decision support data system), and (c) leadership drivers" (45). These three forms of implementation drivers are critical to changing academic staff's behaviour who provide evidence-based practices within schools (Eagle et al., 2015).

Eagle et al. (2015) stated that effective and sustainable implementation of MTSS practices stems from building staff competencies and system capacity for school-wide reform. Developing and sustaining competency development requires carefully selected staff who can provide professional development training, ongoing coaching, and organizational components to support implementation over time (Eagle et al., 2015). Administrators are expected to create and facilitate organizational supports (e.g., principals, superintendents), and effective leadership is a crucial component in MTSS implementation and successfully implementing change (Eagle et al., 2015). Eagle et al. (2015) stated that district leadership needs to be aware, knowledgeable, and

involved in the scaling-up process for systems-level change. Knowledge about systemic change initiatives, which includes understanding educational structures, policies, and student needs, is essential. The educational staff involved must be aware of the personnel skills and capacities existing within the system to strategically utilize staff (Eagle et al., 2015). The knowledge of systematic change emphasizes collaborative partnerships and the need for their effectiveness to provide more comprehensive support to students and families (Eagle et al., 2015).

Below is a detailed description of services, goals, and expectations for each tier. Tier 1 services are focused on instructional practices that include evidence-based whole group and small group instruction and high-quality instruction. Academic supports include differential teaching, adapted learning materials, and specialized equipment (desks/chairs) (Wexler, 2017). Tier 1 includes behaviour supports to provide explicit instruction in expectations for students through positively stated rules and positive reinforcement for appropriate following of the rules (Wexler, 2017). Tier 1 services include school and class-wide socio-emotional curricula to teach skills that promote and facilitate student success. Behavioural and social-emotional supports in Tier 1 teach self-monitoring skills, how to manage emotions, create, and maintain positive relationships, and manage situations appropriately. If students cannot meet behavioural or academic expectations, they will move to Tier 2 to receive additional support (Wexler, 2017).

Tier 2 (secondary) services target 10–15% of students (Wexler, 2017). This additional support supplements core instruction, providing more exposure to the material, extra time, and opportunities to learn and practice skills the students struggle with within class-wide instruction. Generally, there are approximately 30 to 40 minutes of supplemental instruction daily. In Tiers 1 and 2, behavioural and academic support is given by general education teachers and specialists and delivered to students in small groups or at an individual level when appropriate (Wexler,

2017). Behavioural interventions in Tier 2 consist of evidence-based behavioural assessment, instruction that targets students and the classroom, teaching regulation and monitoring skills, social skill groups, and structured feedback interventions (Wexler, 2017). Tier 2 services are expected to last from 6 to 10 weeks. In some cases, students with more needs may require an additional 10 to 20 weeks. If students are unable to make progress or achieve expectations following Tier 2 services, they will move to Tier 3 (Wexler, 2017).

Tier 3 (tertiary) supports/interventions are the most intensive education supports available, and students receive this support if assessment data indicates that Tiers 1 and 2 have not been effective (Wexler, 2017). Tier 3 supports are intended to assist around 1-5% of students. Specialists provide the support. Supports are strategic and intensive and last longer than 6 to 20 weeks and generally include 20 to 30-minute individual intervention sessions three or more times per week (Wexler, 2017). Tier 3 includes academic supports, including Individual Education Plans (IEPs), alternative programs, and supplemental core instruction of target skill deficits. Socio-emotional/behavioural support in Tier 3 involves individualized assessment to understand the function of the student's behaviour and inform intervention. Specialists conduct individual assessments and functional behaviour assessments. Results from the assessments are used to create behavioural intervention plans to teach students replacement behaviours and reduce the problem behaviour (Wexler, 2017). Tier 3 supports can include intensive reinforcement systems and small group or individual counselling (Wexler, 2017).

Universal screening is a key part of MTSS. It involves behavioural and academic screenings to identify students who need more intensive support. School staff and specialists provide universal screening measures to every student and then review the results to determine

students at risk for one or a combination of future academic, socio-emotional, or behavioural problems (Wexler, 2017).

Roles and Responsibilities of School Personnel in Inclusive Education

Teachers

Teachers are at the center of inclusive education. In the literature, there is a long list of teachers' responsibilities regarding inclusive education, including helping plan and personalize programming for students, monitoring students' progress and their success, holding and contributing to review meetings, and communicating with parents (Suleymanov, 2015). Tyagi (2016) stated that teachers can make the initial identification of children in need of support within the classroom and can make the referral to the school team. Initial identification and referrals are essential in ensuring students experience equitable and inclusive education. Teachers are considered responsible for performing many different skills that promote inclusive education, such as providing educational opportunities for all students in their classrooms, acting as a team member on assessment and IEP committees (Suleymanov, 2015), and providing adaptations in student evaluations, preparations, and oversight over teaching aids for students (i.e., assistive technology) and remedial instruction (Tyagi, 2016). Further, it is recommended that teachers be innovative in providing equal education opportunities for all students, advocate for inclusive environments and their students, and help students reach their full potential by responding to specific needs of each student by applying a wide range of teaching strategies (Suleymanov, 2015). This includes removing physical barriers, placing students in proper places in their classroom, so they feel comfortable and benefit from the class, involving all students in classroom activities, and making the classroom space accessible (Tyagi, 2016). Finally, teachers are encouraged to accept all students and foster and help develop positive student-teacher

relationships and relationships among students (Tyagi, 2016). The responsibilities held by teachers are critical to ensure success in inclusive education directives. Most of the responsibilities listed above are theoretical and aspirational rather than evidence based.

Principals

Thompson (2015) stated that the role of principals is crucial for inclusive education; as administrative leaders, principals take on the responsibility to create, promote, and continue school-wide change for inclusive education. A principal's main role in inclusive education is effecting informed change and leading the school based on evidence-based practices to improve the school environment for all students (Thompson, 2015). Principals are expected to assume instructional leadership roles by supporting teachers and providing professional development for all educational staff; by doing so, they promote collaboration between educational staff and focus on the expertise of staff members (Thompson, 2015). Garrison-Wade, Sobel, and Fulmer (2007) stated that "supportive principals should: (a) be knowledgeable about differentiation of instruction; (b) help teachers attend professional development opportunities; (c) provide coaching; (d) arrange for teachers to visit each other; and (e) field questions that parents and family have about special education teaching practices" (128). To facilitate inclusive education, principals must understand the policies, research, and technical aspects of inclusive education to support staff and students, evaluate/monitor, and provide services, supports, and adaptations for students with disabilities (Thompson, 2015). As the scope of inclusive education has expanded, principals' roles have expanded: they are involved in conducting teacher evaluations, monitoring curriculum and instruction, facilitating collaboration with academic staff, attending meetings for students with disabilities, and developing activities for staff development -all of which are

significant responsibilities for principals (Thomson, 2015). As with teachers, most of the responsibilities listed above are theoretical and aspirational rather than evidence based.

Theoretical Roles and Responsibilities of School Psychologists in Inclusive Education

There is relatively little written about school psychologists' roles and responsibilities in inclusive education. A few articles describe or recommend how school psychologists could be involved in inclusive education. In an early article, Burden (1981) suggested that psychologists could be more effective practitioners if they worked with schools at the systems level, stating that psychologists working at the systems level could help school staff build and reflect on their practices and help implement change to develop whole school development for the benefit of all students, not only students with disabilities. In a 2004 article, Farrell suggested that school psychologists could play a central role in assessing children with "special educational needs" and could influence policy and practice in this complex area by contributing their knowledge on behaviour, social-emotional, and academics. Since school psychologists are involved in the process of providing assessments and offering advice, training, and support in a broad spectrum, Farrell (2004) indicated that school psychologists could influence developments in education policy on inclusive education, although it may be challenging to get all academic staff to participate, create consistency, and advocate for change. Bartolo et al. (2015) detailed that school psychologists are unique in the school system in how they can facilitate education because of their training and skill set: school psychologists' training specifically, can help promote and develop cooperation with and between staff to benefit students' achievement and school involvement. School psychologists can help foster cooperation by demonstrating how teachers and students can communicate academic, behavioural, and socioemotional needs (Bartolo et al., 2015). Within their training, school psychologists learn to adopt a non-judgmental, unconditional

positive regard to clients, in this case, students, whatever their diverse characteristics, beliefs, or values. A school psychologist's ability to facilitate inclusive education is "reflected very strongly in the ethical codes for psychologists under the principle of respect for a person's rights and dignity" (Bartolo et al., 2015, 52). Bartolo et al. (2015) also stated that, in addition to school psychologists developing and providing services to facilitate healthy student development and engagement in learning, they could take on leadership positions that would allow them to influence system-wide changes such as implementing MTSS, working with teachers and administration, and being a part of policies and inclusive documents (Bartolo et al., 2015).

Bartolo et al. (2015) stated that school psychologists could play a role in supporting teachers. For example, teachers and teaching assistants could work with school psychologists to learn more about child development and thus be more able to understand and address children's needs. Moreover, Bartolo et al. (2015) suggested that school psychologists could work with teachers and staff to ensure that all the students, families, and staff were welcomed by using their diverse strengths to enrich the education system. Bartolo et al. (2015) highlighted that school psychologists could also help teachers handle the stress involved in supporting the learning of all students.

Kellems et al. (2016) stated that although school psychologists have varied availability in the services they can offer, their role in transition planning is essential. In their view, school psychologists could establish effective transition plans for students by completing transition assessments and working with data. The authors thought that school psychologists were in an ideal situation to facilitate inclusive education because of their training, assessment practices, data-based decision-making, and their consultation with students, parents, and academic staff.

School psychologists' roles or responsibilities in research contribute to a comprehensive scope and vision of post-high school services (Kellems et al., 2016).

As noted earlier, there has been little attention to the roles and responsibilities of school psychologists in implementing inclusive education. There are very few empirical studies of school psychologists' role in inclusive education, and most are theoretical and policy recommendations.

In addition to the gap in knowledge of school psychologists in inclusive education, more generally, there is a gap between theory and implementation in inclusive education. The lack of studies reporting on the implementation of inclusive education has created an overall gap in understanding what inclusive education looks like in educational systems. This gap is demonstrated by Amor et al. (2018) in their review, *International Perspectives and Trends in Research on Inclusive Education: A Systematic Review*. Amor et al. (2018) did a systematic literature review of peer-reviewed articles published in English- and Spanish-language journals over 15 years (2002–2016). The English-language search results included 1860 possible articles from the PsycInfo database and 3801 from the ERIC database. Out of the total of 5661 English-written articles collected, 2078 articles met all the inclusion criteria (Amor et al., 2018).

Amor et al. (2018) coded all the articles into five categories, the first being theoretical articles (providing a rationale for inclusive education based on existing or developing theory) and the second, attitudinal (attitudes and perceptions of different stakeholders regarding inclusive education. The third category was descriptive articles, based on quantitative and qualitative data, on the current status of inclusive education in a school, community, or country. The final two categories were intervention studies (reported data on student-level outcomes resulting from the

implementation of inclusive practice) and literature reviews (describing findings from a literature review or meta-analysis about inclusive education) (Amor et al., 2018).

The results of the study demonstrated that in the English-language literature, 25% of the 2078 articles were coded as attitudinal, 616 (30%) were coded as descriptive articles, and 720 articles (35%), with an average of 48 articles per year, were coded as theory articles. Literature reviews comprised only 4% of the 2078 English-language articles, and 100 studies (5%) were coded as examining the efficacy of interventions (Amor et al., 2018). Amor et al. (2018) concluded that the literature on inclusive education has been primarily theoretical and descriptive. Their data seemed supported findings discussed by other global researchers who have noted the lack of evidence and evidence-based practices in the field of disabilities at a general level and in the educational context. This finding suggests an ongoing focus on providing a theoretical justification for inclusive education and describing the current status of inclusive education and models developed to advance inclusive education (Amor et al., 2018).

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

I collected inclusive education documents including policies and reports for this thesis analysis from the Education and Early Childhood Development of Nova Scotia Website (EECD). I had chosen these documents that focused specific groups of students (e.g., marginalized students and students with disabilities) and reports and documents that concentrated on the education system and all students in Nova Scotia. I chose the general documents because currently, with no information to detail what inclusive education looks like at the implementation level, these general documents outline what should be happening in the school system as they serve as guidelines and mandates. I picked the specific documents because, similarly to the general documents, there is no research to demonstrate the implementation of inclusive education for particular groups and a foundation of inclusive education is the protection of groups at risk for discrimination, exclusion, and discrimination. To analyze each document, I created factors of analysis to outline how each document aligned with aspects of inclusive education, connection to the legislature that promotes inclusive education, and the link or lack thereof to school psychologists. Each document was analyzed using the following dimensions:

- The document's conceptualization/ definition of inclusive education.

- The document's use of the medical model or the social model (or a combination).

- How the document connects to the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act.

  a. The protected group(s) referenced in the document.

  b. The document's connection to the protection of the protected group(s).

- The document's connection to the goals of the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act

  a. The connection between the document's recommendations and interventions and the directives of the Act.

- The terminology used to describe the protected group(s): for example: students with disabilities and "students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)"

- Recommendations from the document, including interventions.

- The connection between the recommendations and MTSS.

- If the document references school psychologists, and if so, in what context(s).

- Other professionals/ paraprofessionals referenced and how their roles and responsibilities are described.

- Which competencies (MRA, NSBEP, CPA, Educational Psychologist) are relevant to the document's recommendations.

Inclusive education Documents

The documents for analysis were gathered from the Education and Early Childhood Development of Nova Scotia Website (EECD: https://www.ednet.ns.ca/document-depot) and were chosen due to their focus on specific groups of students and general inclusive education documents for whole school inclusion. The rationale for using the website of EECD to identify documents was that it had the most current and applicable inclusive education documents, and the documents are intended to be implemented in classrooms across Nova Scotia. Further, by using the EECD website, the documents and policies are up to date, which allows for this policy analysis to be current with the Nova Scotia education system. The documents that were reviewed were current as of May 2022.

Some documents focused on inclusive education more generally, and others were concerned with specific groups. I chose these specific general documents as they were the only general policies, reports, and documents available on the EECD. In order to understand how inclusive education has been shaped for all students, educators, and school systems across Nova Scotia, it was essential to analyze the documents used to create, facilitate, implement, and change inclusive education across the province. Since there is no report or documentation to demonstrate what inclusive education looks like in schools across Nova Scotia, these policies, reports, and documents outline what has been mandated and should be implemented or in practice. Therefore, these general documents were chosen to demonstrate what inclusive education theoretically looks like across the province for students, families, educators, and outside agencies.

The general documents I analyzed were the *Education Act of Nova Scotia* (Nova Scotia Legislature, 2018), the *Glaze report* or *Raise the Bar report* (Province of Nova Scotia, 2018), the *Students First document* (Commission of Inclusive Education, 2018), and the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019).

The *Education Act of Nova Scotia* (Nova Scotia Legislature, 2018) was created to recognize that school staff and teachers needed to acknowledge and accommodate differences in learning styles and participate in individual planning and individual program plans. The *Glaze report*, or *Raise the Bar report* (Province of Nova Scotia, 2018), was commissioned to provide recommendations for improvements within a student-centred education system in roles, responsibilities, and administration structure in Nova Scotia, and to provide a research-based overview of inclusive education's current practice and policy. The *Students First report* (Commission of Inclusive Education, 2018) outlined a comprehensive strategy for ensuring all Nova Scotia students have access to the education system and receive access to inclusive

education. The last general document analyzed was the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019). This document was created to acknowledge the importance of students' well-being and well-being impact on achievement to ensure some processes and structures are student-centred, collaborative, and appropriate. These specific inclusive education documents address the need for systematic change in schools to address the inequality students face in the education system.

I also analyzed inclusive education documents that focus on particular groups of students. The analysis needed to include documents that emphasized groups of students as inclusive education highlights groups who have been historically marginalized, discriminated against, and exploited due to their differences from typically developing peers or the majority. The chosen documents demonstrated groups who have faced or are likely to face injustice in the education system; the education system in Nova Scotia needed specific policies, reports, or acts to protect their rights to education. I chose these documents because they were documents that highlighted what inclusive education should look like in Nova Scotia for historically marginalized students in the education system. Each of these documens also provided recommendations, guidelines, and principles that provided insight into what inclusive education should look like at the implementation level in Nova Scotia, as there is currently no data on the implementation of inclusive education for marginalized groups of students.

The specific documents were: the *BLAC Report* on education (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994) and updates to this report since 1994, the *Provincial Mi'kmaq Education Act* (Nova Scotia Legislature, 1998*),* the *Racial Equity Policy* (Province of Nova Scotia, 2002), the *Special Education Policy* (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008), and the *Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender-nonconforming Students* (Province of Nova Scotia, 2014).

The *BLAC Report* (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994) examined the disconnect between the African Nova Scotian experience and the lack of effective policies for their needs. The report created recommendations for multicultural/antiracism policies, access to higher education, and financial support, and diverse learning and teaching materials that reflect multiculturism. The *Provincial Mi'kmaq Education Act* (Nova Scotia Legislature, 1998) was created to allow self-governance in education on reserves to improve the quality of education for all Mi'kmaq students. The *Racial Equity Policy* (Province of Nova Scotia, 2002) was created to develop and review school board policies on race relations and equity issues. It was based on the Department's work in responding to various issues brought into focus by the *BLAC Report* (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994) and the *Report of the Task Force on Mi'kmaq Education* (2014). The *Special Education Policy* (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008) outlined the Department of Education policy regarding the education of students with special needs in the Nova Scotia school system. This policy was intended to assist school boards in developing policies that direct and deliver programs and services to students with "special needs." The *Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender-nonconforming Students* (Province of Nova Scotia, 2014) was created by EECD to develop best practice guidelines to ensure that transgender and gender-nonconforming students have equitable access to school life, including academics, extracurriculars, and social aspects that preserve and protect their dignity. These documents were essential to analyze as they focused on specific groups of students and included specific inclusive education definitions and recommendations. As mentioned, all documents were examined through the lens of the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act* and the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act.*

It should be noted that some of the documents listed above are dated, but they were included because the EECD continues to have them on their website as current guides and documents for the facilitation of inclusive education.

Competencies of Psychologists

In order to understand the possible roles and responsibilities of Nova Scotia school psychologists in inclusive education, there needed to be an outline of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes establish the competencies that would allow Nova Scotia school psychologists to work ethically in promoting and facilitating inclusive education. Psychologists are required to demonstrate competency in different domains in order to become registered as psychologists and to continue to practice. Competence and competencies in psychology are defined as compromising knowledge, skill, judgment, and attitudes, which, when integrated, result in appropriate and effective action being taken in a particular situation (Rodolfa et al., 2005). Competence or competencies guide psychologists' practices and direct psychologists' areas and scope of practice (Rodolfa et al., 2005). A competency model thus provides a good framework for understanding the knowledge, skills, and attitudes psychologists will have. The next section provides an overview of different competency frameworks for psychologists, which include school psychologists. Three of the competency lists are from Canadian organizations: the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA), Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA), and the Canadian Psychological Association Educational Psychologist section (See Table 2). The fourth list is from the Nova Scotia Board of Examiners in Psychology (NSBEP) which is the regulatory body in psychology in Nova Scotia. I will also discuss the competencies outlined by the National Association of School Psychology (NASP), which is based in the United States.

Canadian Psychological Association (CPA)

The CPA accredits training programs, but it does not accredit, register, license, or certify individuals to practice psychology in Canada. That is left to the provincial regulatory bodies. CPA stated that the purpose of accreditation is to:

> promote excellence in the education and training of professional psychologists, provide a professional and objective evaluation of the programs which provide this education and training, and offer a measure of accountability to the many publics CPA serves (e.g., psychologists, students, institutions that employ psychologists, users of psychological services) that accredited programs have met a community standard of excellence in education and training (CPA, 2019, 2).

The Canadian Psychological Association stated there are critical reasons for a program to be accredited; the first is a "stamp of approval" from the larger psychology community that says a particular program meets the standards considered necessary for professional psychology training. In addition, that graduating from an accredited program facilitates the licensure/registration process (CPA, 2022). It is important to note that master-level programs are not eligible for accreditation as the CPA only accredits doctoral programs.

The CPA stated that foundational competencies represent "the consolidated knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes in broad areas of professional practice, on which functional competencies are built" (CPA, 2020, 9). These competencies/standards are currently under revision, but these competencies continue to be the standard as of May 2022. Each competency applies to functional competencies. To have competency in any of the functional competencies, the foundational competencies must first be met and demonstrated. The CPA outlined foundational competencies in eight separate and specific categories.

Interpersonal Skills and Communication. This competency recognizes the importance of training students in the attainment and refinement of interpersonal skills. Interpersonal skills are considered interactions with research participants, therapeutic relationships, interactions with supervisors, peers, and professionals, and online professionalism and sensitivity to public perception in advocacy efforts (CPA, 2020).

Reflective Practice and Bias Evaluation. This competency refers to the educational program requirement to provide students with skills that enable them to reflect and understand their own biases, beliefs, assumptions, power, and privilege concerning professional practices. Further, students and future psychologists should be aware of their cognitive biases in receiving and organizing information and ultimately concluding and providing recommendations (CPA, 2020).

Ethics, Standards, Laws, and Policies. This competency refers to program requirements to provide students with training in professional ethics which includes ethical decision making, dilemma resolution, understanding the standards of practice, governing laws of psychology practice, and awareness of policies informing the practice of psychology (CPA, 2020). This competency emphasizes the importance of embedding all professional skills within the context of regulatory, ethical, and legal standards.

Inter-professional Collaboration and Service Settings. This competency considers the interdisciplinary context in which psychologists' services are in conjunction with this, including but are not limited to, family physicians, school principals and social workers. As well, psychologists must be aware of the cultural and political dynamics of the organization (CPA, 2020).

The CPA and it is Accreditation Panel outlined functional competencies that are common to all psychologists at the entry point of practice which are based on the competencies defined in the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA). CPA lists five functional competencies.

Assessment. This competency entails that a psychologist can complete the "assessment and diagnosis of mental health problems, disorders, strengths, capabilities, and contextual factors associated with clients" (CPA, 2020, 9).

Intervention. The intervention competency includes "interventions [that] are designed to alleviate suffering or treat individuals with mental disorders and promote the well-being and health of clients" (CPA, 2020, 9).

Consultation. This competency includes the ability of the psychologist to "provide expert guidance or professional assistance in response to a team's, colleague's, client's and system's goals and needs" (CPA, 2020, 9).

Supervision. The focus of this competency is on the "supervision and training in the professional knowledge base necessary for the evaluation of the effectiveness of foundational competencies, understanding that the practice of clinical supervision has the simultaneous purpose of enhancing professional functioning and supporting the well-being of junior members of the profession while monitoring the services and research quality to individuals and groups" (CPA, 2020, 9).

Program Development and Program Evaluation. This competency describes assessing and evaluating population needs and programs. More specifically, this competency focuses on program functioning, and outcomes include developing and maintaining education, treatment, and other programs (CPA, 2020).

After entry into professional psychological practice, the CPA includes professional competencies that are not a part of the before-mentioned functional competency list but are typically practiced in the field but not required. The first is *teaching,* which involves providing information, evaluating the knowledge and skill, and disseminating knowledge in professional psychology. The second is *leadership, service, and advocacy,* which entails the management of the direct services and administration of organizations, communities, programs, and agencies. The actions target the impact of political, economic, and cultural factors and organization to promote change in the client, institutional, and systems-level (CPA, 2020).

Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA)

In 2001, consensus on competency-based regulations to facilitate mobility for professional psychologists was achieved in Canada through the MRA (Canadian Psychological Association, 2001). The purpose of the MRA was to establish the conditions under which a psychologist who is registered or licenced to practice without supervision in one Canadian jurisdiction would have their qualifications recognized in another jurisdiction that is a Party to this Agreement. The MRA was a product of collaboration between the Canadian Psychological Association, the Canadian Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology, and the Council (Rubin et al., 2007) and included the following core competencies: interpersonal relationships, assessment and evaluation, intervention and consultation, research, and ethics and standards (CPA, 2001). In some provinces, supervision is included as a core competency.

Signatories to the *MRA* are the College of Psychologists of British Columbia, College of Alberta Psychologists, Saskatchewan Psychological Association, Psychological Association of Manitoba, College of Psychologists of Ontario, L'Ordre des Psycholgues du Quebec, College of Psychologists New Brunswick, Nova Scotia Board of Examiners in Psychology, Newfoundland Board of Examiners in Psychology, and the Government of the Northwest Territories (CPA, 2001).

The MRA document is intended to ensure that psychologists across Canada who possess the required competencies and are licensed or registered to practice without supervision in one Canadian jurisdiction have their qualifications recognized in another jurisdiction included in the MRA agreement (Rubin et al., 2007). The MRA document was and is vital for school psychologists as it means that they can work in different provinces that signed the MRA document. The MRA document defined the domain and delineates the requisite knowledge and skills within each competency domain (Rubin et al., 2007).

Interpersonal Relationships. Interpersonal relationships are described as the basic competencies that form the basis of all other competencies. Interpersonal Relationships are the context in which psychologists usually do their work, including parent-child relationships, boss-employee, and spouses. Psychologists are expected to establish and maintain a constructive working environment and alliance with their client(s) and have cultural competence (MRA, 2001). This competency entails a psychologist's ability to know the power of relationships and therapeutic alliance and have self-knowledge on motivation, resources, values, and personal biases, and includes effective communication skills, establishing and maintaining rapport, trust, and respect in professional relationships (MRA, 2001).

Assessment and Evaluation. This competency draws on a psychologist's ability to draw on diverse evaluation methods and determine the best methods and practices. Psychologists require specific skills in assessment, and psychologists are expected to apply those skills to many situations other than the initial evaluation assessment, such as program evaluation, treatment outcomes, and problem-solving within clinical and non-clinical settings. Assessment and Evaluation includes a psychologist's knowledge of assessment methods, human development, diagnosis, and knowledge of populations being served (MRA, 2001), as well as skills such as "formulation of a referral question, information on psychometric methods, report writing, selection of methods, information processing and collection, formulation of hypothesis and diagnosis, and formulation of an action plan" (MRA, 2001, 8).

Intervention and Consultation. Intervention and consultation comprise the third competency and is described as the activities that restore, promote, sustain, and enhance clients' positive functioning and sense of well-being through developmental, remedial, and preventative services (MRA, 2001). Psychologists are expected to "be aware of context and diversity, knowledge of interventions that promote health and wellness, ability to make appropriate referrals and consults, and respect for the positive aspects of all practical approaches, which should reflect openness to varied viewpoints and methods, learning of an array of various interventions with individuals and systems" (MRA, 2001, 9). Skills in this competency area include "establishing and maintaining professional relationships with clients and populations served, analyzing the information, developing a conceptual framework, communicating this to the client, and selecting appropriate intervention methods" (MRA, 2001, 9), as well as the ability to "gather information about the nature and severity of problems, formulate hypotheses about the

factors contributing to the problem through qualitative and quantitive means, and establish and maintain appropriate interdisciplinary relationships with colleagues" (MRA, 2001, 9).

Research. The research competency includes psychology programs that require students to receive research training so that students are trained in the basic understanding of and respect for the scientific underpinnings of the discipline. In addition, students are provided with sufficient skills to conduct research to develop and carry out projects in a professional and academic context (MRA, 2001). The knowledge in this competency includes "basic knowledge of research methods and the applications of scientific research, including applied statistics and measurement theory, the logic of different models of scientific research, and qualitative research methods (interviewing and observation)" (MRA, 2001, 9). The skills include the "application of various research approaches to social systems, the ability to write professional reports, and critical reasoning skills" (MRA, 2001, 9).

Ethics and Standards. With ethics and standards, professionals are expected to accept their obligations, conduct themselves ethically, be sensitive to others, and establish professional relationships with the applicable standards and constraints (MRA, 2001). Skills within this competency include "resolution of ethical dilemmas, ethical decision-making process, and proactive identification of potential ethical dilemmas" (MRA, 2001, 9).

Supervision. Supervision is described as the "management that involves responsibility for the services provided under one's supervision" (MRA, 2001, 10), and can include teaching in the context of a relationship that focuses on developing and enhancing the competency of the supervised individual (MRA, 2001). Knowledge in the supervision competency includes the supervisor providing and collaborating on "available technical resources, evaluation modalities, power relationships, and cultural, gender, and ethnic issues" (MRA 2001, 10).

Further, psychologists must have the knowledge to "model for the acquisition of competencies under Supervision, methods and techniques of Supervision, and evaluation modalities" (MRA, 2001, 10). Skills within this competency include sensitivity to sex, culture, power, and ethnic issues, providing clear learning objectives, and creating a participatory climate. Further supervision skills entail that the supervisee learns to be open and prepared. The supervision should also provide links between learning approaches, evaluation criteria, and awareness of one's strengths and limitations. Finally, creating evaluations based on learning objectives and the opportunity to integrate knowledge (MRA, 2020).

The Nova Scotia Board of Examiners in Psychology (NSBEP)

During the 1960s and 1970s, the number of psychologists in Nova Scotia was growing, but there was no provincial legislation governing the practice of psychology. The Psychologists Act came into effect on March 3, 1980, through the Nova Scotia House of Assembly as a government bill and was proclaimed into law on December 18, 1980. Initially, NSBEP oversaw drafting regulations and establishing mechanisms for applicants to follow, supervision, and complaints against members (NSBEP 2022). Now, NSBEP is the governing body for the practice of psychology, and they continue to ensure that psychologists in practice within Nova Scotia have met the conditions of education, training, and supervised practice.

NSBEP outlined five core competency areas that psychologists must achieve in order to be eligible to be registered as a psychologist in Nova Scotia:

Assessment and Evaluation. The assessment and evaluation competency is defined as a professional psychologist's ability to draw on diverse evaluation methods, deciding on best-suited methods instead of primarily or only relying on formalized testing as an automatic response (NSBEP 2022). Skills for assessment should be utilized beyond the initial evaluation and applied to program evaluation, treatment outcome, program evaluation, and clinical and non-clinical settings (NSBEP 2022).

Intervention. Intervention is defined as the activities that promote, sustain, restore, and enhance positive functioning in conjunction with a sense of well-being in clients with preventative, remedial, and developmental services (NSBEP 2022).

Research. The research competency outlines the training a professional psychologist should receive to "develop a basic understanding of and respect for the scientific underpinnings of the discipline, knowledge of methods to be good consumers of products of scientific knowledge" (NSBEP 2022, 2) and enable them to be able to create and work on professional and academic projects (NSBEP 2022).

Ethics and Standards. The ethics and standards competency are defined by NSBEP as a psychologist's responsibility to ethically conduct themselves in accord with *the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists* and standards of the profession (NSBEP 2022).

Interpersonal Relationships. Interpersonal relationships are described as "the basic form of all other competencies" (NSBEP 2022, 3). NSBEP states that psychologists do their work in the context of interpersonal relationships and must be able to create and maintain working alliances with clients and within the profession (NSBEP 2022).

Educational and School Psychology Section of CPA

Within the CPA, there is a section, Educational and School Psychology, which has a document, "Considering a Career as a School Psychologist in Canada? Role, Training, and Prospects" which outlined five guidelines for the roles and responsibilities for school psychologists. Although this section does not have regulatory or accrediting power, it is useful to include their list of guidelines for roles and responsibilities because it is specific to school psychologists, unlike the CPA accreditation standards and the MRA and NSBEP competencies (CPA, 2022).

Psychoeducational Assessments. School psychologists do psychoeducational assessments to assess the academic, cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioural functioning of students through standardized testing, observations, and interviews to provide an understanding of a student's strengths and weaknesses, adaptive skills, learning strengths and challenges, and provide a diagnosis (CPA, 2022). School psychologists also provide recommendations for the students, teachers, families, and school staff, such as behaviour management, adaptive behaviour/ social skills, placement, and support for students with disabilities and exceptionalities. School psychologists deliver findings and results of assessments and provide a written report to outline the supports and recommendations (CPA Education, 2022).

Case, Classroom, and System Consultation. Case, classroom, and systems consultation consists of a school psychologist's ability to consult with school administration and teachers to support them in interventions for individual students' social, emotional, behavioural, and educational needs (CPA, 2022). Consultations done by school psychologists should focus on providing system-wide consultations such as in-service or professional development for school staff, development and evaluation of new programs, and communication/collaboration with other

professionals and community members. School psychologists should also be integral members of their school team as they can identify needs, support, and provide formal and informal consultation (CPA, 2022).

Prevention and Intervention. Prevention and intervention were identified as a significant part of a school psychologist's responsibility. School psychologists can collaborate with all school staff to help develop and evaluate programs within the school, specifically with the MTSS framework (CPA, 2022).

Supervision, Professional Training, and Leadership. Supervision, professional training, and leadership is another identified section of the CPA's guidelines for school psychologists (CPA, 2022). This aspect of competency focuses on school psychologists who are licensed/registered to provide supervision to interns, practicum students, and professional training workshops and courses to graduate students (CPA, 2022).

Research. School psychologists can work in research settings such as universities or collaborate with university researchers or research departments to conduct on relevant professional topics (CPA, 2022).

National Association of School Psychology (NASP)

NASP is the world's largest professional association of school psychologists, with members from the United States and 25 other countries. NASP's vision is that all children can access the behaviour, learning, and mental health support they need to thrive at home, school, and throughout their lives (NASP 2022), implemented through effective practices. Although NASP is an organization within the United States, it is helpful to discuss it, because Canada does not have an accreditation specific to school psychology. To receive credentials through NASP, an applicant must "require a specialist-level degree (as a minimum) in school psychology by

completing a NASP- approved or NASP-accredited school psychology program; holding a degree in school psychology from a non-accredited program; holding the NCSP credential; previously completing a graduate degree in a related field (e.g., clinical psychology, school counselling) followed by courses and field experiences to help prepare for effective school psychological practice" (NASP 2020, 27).

NASP stated that "School psychologists have a foundation in the knowledge bases for both psychology and education, including theories, models, research, evidence-based practices, implementation strategies within the domains and the ability to communicate important principles and concepts. School psychologists use effective strategies and skills in the domains to help students succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally" (NASP, 2020, 2). Further, NASP stated that school psychologists can apply their skills and knowledge by creating equitable, supportive, safe, and effective environments for learning and enhancing all student's school, community, and family collaboration (NASP, 2020). School psychologists can ensure that their professional practices, skills, and knowledge reflect an understanding and respect for human diversity and can do so by promoting effective services along-side advocacy and social justice for all students, family, and schools (NASP, 2020). Moreover, NASP highlighted that "School psychologists integrate knowledge and professional skills across the ten domains of school psychology practice. They deliver a comprehensive range of services in professional practice that result in direct, measurable outcomes for students, families, schools, and other consumers." (NASP 2020, 2).

NASP has stated its commitment to supporting crucial conversations about antiracism, equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice within the organization and the profession of

school psychology (NASP, 2019). Their position statement "Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism" states that:

> positive educational and social outcomes for all children and youth are possible only in a society—and schools within it—that guarantees equitable treatment to all people, regardless of race, class, culture, language, gender, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, citizenship, ability, and other dimensions of difference. NASP firmly believes that all students are entitled to an education that affirms and validates the diversity of their cultural and individual differences, fosters resilience, and facilitates well-being and positive academic and mental health outcomes." (NASP, 2019)

In contrast to the other psychology organizations listed above, NASP is explicit about its commitment to inclusion for all students and inclusive education and states that all students should receive appropriate public education no matter culture, race, background, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or educational need (NASP, 2019). NASP maintained that students learn best in inclusive environments that implement high-quality science-based instruction. NASP defined inclusive programs as programs in which student with or without disabilities receive specialized and appropriate instruction and services in age-appropriate general education classrooms (NASP, 2019). NASP stated that school staff and parents should work together for children to receive free and appropriate education in an inclusive environment. Secondly, general education should include all children, meaning that it needs to have instructional options and support services based on the individual psychoeducational needs of each student and needs to be evidence-based. Thirdly, it is critical to recognize what students are struggling academically and implement research-based and evidence-based interventions. Finally, school psychologists should identify children's psychoeducational needs through a

multidimensional and non-biased assessment process (NASP, 2019). NASP supports a multitiered model of evidence-based instruction and intervention, "Response to Intervention" (RTI), as a practical approach for meeting the learning needs of all students in inclusive environments. The multitiered model supports inclusive education and instruction for all students and data-driven decisions. RTI models also incorporate student diversity, culture, background, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or educational need (NASP, 2019).

Method

To understand how school psychologists in Nova Scotia can facilitate inclusive education, I analyzed the Nova Scotia inclusive education documents identified above. I used a template to guide the analysis of each document to ensure consistency (See table 2). The categories of analysis for each document were: first, the document's conceptualization, or definition of inclusive education; and second if the document reflected a social or medical model (or combination). Thirdly the documents connection to the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*, such as which protected characteristics referenced and how the document connected to the protection of said characteristics. In addition, the four factor was the documents' connection to the goals of the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act*, specifically, the connection between the documents' recommendations and interventions and the directives of the Act. The fifth factor was the connection to the *Nova Accessibility Act*. The six factor was the analysis of the specific terminology used to describe the protected group (e.g., "disability" or "student with special educational needs (SEN)"). In addition, I examined the recommendations/interventions from documents and the document's connection to the MTSS framework as the seventh factor. The eighth factor was noting if school psychologists were mentioned within documents and, if so, in what context(s), along with what other professionals and paraprofessionals and their

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responsibilities. Finally, the ninth factor was to understand how school psychologists can facilitate inclusive education. I identified which of the competencies outlined above would be relevant for implementing the recommendations in each document. In addition, I took note of important or relevant topics, patterns, and factors that may be included or presented in documents but have not been included in the factors of analysis.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Introduction

In this section, I will present data by category, in the same order as the documents were introduced in the methodology section. The term "explicit" will describe when a document directly references a factor of analysis and "implicit" will mean that, although the term is not stated directly, the document embodies the principles or the factors of term that is referenced.

Conceptualization of Inclusive Education

Three documents contained explicit definitions of inclusive education: the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019b), the *Students First report* (2018), and the *Special Education policy* (2008). Four documents implicitly conceptualized inclusive education: the *Raise the Bar* report (2018), the *Racial Equity policy* (2002), the *BLAC Report* (1994), and the *Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender non-conforming Students* (2014). An implicit definition of inclusive education referred to when a document or act used principles, guidelines, and recommendations that aligned with foundational principles of inclusive education. Foundational principles of inclusive education included student-focused achievement, student well-being, social, equitable, and physical inclusion. In addition, foundational principles also included removing barriers to learning for students, valuing, and respecting differences, equitable learning materials and teaching. Foundational principles of inclusive education included providing access to education, the educational environment, programs and services for students, families, teachers, and the community. In addition, foundational principles of inclusive education consisted of putting students first and valuing their choices, backgrounds, needs, and strengths (Krischler,

Powell, & Pit-Ten Cate, 2019; Qvortrup & Qvortrup, 2017; United Nations, 2015). Two

documents did not have an explicit or implicit definition or conceptualization of inclusive

education: the *Mi'kmaq Education Act* (1998) and the *Education Act* (2018).

The Education Act of Nova Scotia (Nova Scotia Legislature, 2018)

The *Education Act* (2018) did not have an explicit or implicit definition of inclusive

education. Although the document outlined the right of Nova Scotian students to attend school, it

did not include inclusive principles.

"Subject to this Act and the regulations, every person over the age of five years and under the

age of 21 years has the right to attend a public school serving the school region in which that

person resides, as assigned by a regional centre (2018, c. 1, Sch. A, s. 6., 6):

The Raise the Bar report (Glaze et al., 2018)

The *Raise the Bar* report (2018) demonstrated an implicit definition of inclusive

education, because the report's foundational principles were consistent with the foundations of

inclusive education, promoting equity, excellence, and student learning. For example, the first

principle, Student learning and achievement, stated, "Nova Scotia must increase its students'

performance nationally and internationally and close achievement gaps in general and in

particular for historically marginalized groups, such as African Nova Scotians and Mi'kmaq"

(Glaze et, al., 2018, 5). The second principle, Equity and Excellence, stated, "Regardless of

cultural, geographic, or socioeconomic conditions, all actions must be made with a clear focus on

ensuring everyone has access to the best education possible, not simply those of better fortune or

greater influence, and be able to achieve equitable outcomes" (Glaze et, al., 2018, 5).

The Students First report (Commission of Inclusive Education, 2018)

The *Students First report* (2018) explicitly defined inclusive education as "public education that supports the learning, development, and well-being of all students in an equitable, efficient, and effective manner" (Njie et al., 2018, 9). The *Students First report* (2018) also outlined factors of inclusive education, such as the right of all students to quality education, a student-centred, needs-based approach to providing educational programs, and a multi-tiered continuum of settings, programs, and services. Further, the report detailed other factors, such as positive learning environments that facilitate full participation, membership, and learning, evidence-based policies, practices, and procedures, and promote equitable student access to educational programs and services (Njie et al., 2018). The final factor related to inclusive education was the commitment to excellence in teaching, learning, and leadership to empower all students and their full potential (Njie et al., 2018).

The Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019)

The *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019b) defined inclusive education as "a commitment to ensuring a high-quality, culturally, and linguistically responsive and equitable education to support the well-being and achievement of every student. All students should feel that they belong in an inclusive school—accepted, safe, and valued—so they can best learn and succeed" (2019b, 1). The policy also outlined principles of what inclusive education should look like in schools, including teaching with flexibility based on the student's strengths and challenges, equitable and responsive teaching, and common learning environments. Further, the policy also outlined principles of inclusive education that included valuing student voices and choices and commitment to making students feel belonging, safe, and honoured. The *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019b) principles of inclusive education included practices

that support students' strengths and challenges to determine and monitor support. In addition, a principle of inclusive education was also stated as the commitment of all partners to identifying and eliminating barriers to student achievement and well-being (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019b, 2).

The BLAC Report on education (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994)

The *BLAC Report* (1994) exemplified an implicit definition of inclusive education because it contained multiple vital principles of inclusive education but did not directly define or recommend inclusive education. One section where the *BLAC Report* (1994) demonstrated an implicit conceptualization of inclusive education was the report's view on general education: "Our vision is of an education system which is equitable, accessible, inclusive for all learners by the year 2001" (15). In addition, the report also aligned with inclusive principles through a second statement:

"In the near future, we see a system where every child is challenged to achieve personal excellence; where race, age, class, financial resources, and gender are recognized and addressed every day as Nova Scotian educators prepare for full participation in society and in their communities" (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994, 15). The *BLAC Report* (1994) also reflected principles of inclusive education in the statement: "We envision a quality education system where parents and teachers are continually interacting and adjusting inside and outside the school environment to ensure the learner's best interests are considered in the pursuit of an excellent education" (15).

The Provincial Mi'kmaq Education Act (Nova Scotia Legislature, 1998)

The *Mi'kmaq Education Act* (1998) provided no explicit or implicit definition of inclusive education but instead focused on the rights of reserves to provide education for all its residents. The *Mi'kmaq Education Act* (1998) stated, "A community shall, to the extent provided by the Agreement, provide or make provision for primary, elementary and secondary education pro- grams and services to all residents of its reserve" (1998, c. 17, s. 6., 2).

The Racial Equity Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2002)

The *Racial Equity policy* (2002) exhibited an implicit conceptualization of inclusive education through the policy's stated principles as they aligned with key understandings of inclusive education, specifically focused on racial equity. The principles of the policy that supported inclusive education were the elimination of systemic racism in the education system and recognition, respect, and affirmation of the racial and ethnocultural diversity of Nova Scotia. Further, the policy's principles included advancing racial equity in the education system and learning environments that affirm students' dignity, self-worth, and security (Province of Nova Scotia, 2002, 2). Moreover, principles incorporated the need for programs and services that affirm and advance racial equity for all learners, the education system, and the community. The final principles encompassed promoting harmony between staff and students and promoting anti-racism, cross-cultural understanding, human rights education, and race relations within school systems (Province of Nova Scotia, 2002, 2).

The Special Education Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008)

The *Special Education Policy* (2008) provided an explicit definition of inclusive education. Inclusive education was defined as "embodies beliefs, attitudes, and values that promote the basic right of all students to receive appropriate and quality educational programming and services in the company of their peers" (5). To further support the policy's conceptualization of inclusive education, it was stated that:

> the goal of inclusive schooling is to facilitate the membership, participation, and learning of all students in school programs and activities. The support services that are designed to meet students' diverse educational needs should be coordinated within the neighbourhood school and to the extent possible, within grade level/ subject area classrooms (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008, 5).

The Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender-nonconforming Students (Province of Nova Scotia, 2014)

The *Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender non-conforming Students* (2014) illustrated an implicit definition of inclusive education. It established principles that demonstrated foundations of inclusive education specifically for 2S+LGBTQIA students. The document stated, "Ensuring reasonable adaptations, maximizing inclusiveness, and addressing the best interests of the student are inherent in this collaborative decision making" (Province of Nova Scotia, 2014, 10). Another way the document reflected inclusive education was in the statement, "All students, regardless of their gender identity or expression, should be able to participate in physical education classes and extracurricular activities, including competitive and recreation athletic teams, in a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment" (Province of Nova Scotia, 2014, 14).

Social Model and Medical Model of Disability

Seven documents exemplified a social model of disability: the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019), the *Students First report* (2018), the *Raise the Bar* report (2018), the *Education Act* (2018), the *Racial Equity policy* (2002), and the *Special Education Policy* (2008), the *BLAC Report* (1994). Four documents demonstrated a medical model of disability: the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019), the *Education Act* (2018), the *Racial Equity policy* (2002), the *Special Education Policy* (2008). Four documents demonstrated both a social model and medical model of disability: the *Education Act* (2018), the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019), the *Racial Equity policy* (2002), and the *Special Education Policy* (2008). Two documents provided no representation of the social model or medical model of disability: the *Mi'kmaq Education Act* (1998) and the *Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender nonconforming Students* (2014).

The Education Act of Nova Scotia (Nova Scotia Legislature, 2018)

The *Education Act* (2018) reflected both the medical model and social model of disability; the social model of disability was present in the Regional Centre's duties as they were listed to fit education systems to students rather than students to education systems. The duties relevant to the Reginal Centre were:

(a) promote excellence in education and the achievement of all students enrolled in its schools and programs.

(b) develop and implement educational programs for students with special needs within regular instructional settings with their peers in age, in accordance with the regulations and the Minister's policies and guidelines.

(e) facilitate vibrant community involvement in the effective delivery of education, including

engagement and consultation with school advisory councils on issues within the prescribed

mandate of the school advisory councils (2018, c. 1, Sch. A, s. 6., 27).

The medical model of disability was represented in the *Education Act* (2018) through the

roles and responsibilities of teachers, specifically, through the duty which stated teachers must

"participate in individual-program planning and implement individual program plans, as

required, for students with special needs" (2018, c. 1, Sch. A, s. 6., 22). This duty reflected the

medical model because it did not mention the need for teachers to participate in individual

program plans for students without "special needs," nor did it indicate students who fall under

the category of "special needs." The *Education Act* (2018) was silent on the Individual Program

Planning programming of children without special needs, creating a divide between students

with or without "special needs" and indicating that students with "special needs" may require

support that other students may not, segregating them further.

The Raise the Bar report (Province of Nova Scotia, 2018)

The *Raise the Bar* report (2018) reflected the social model of disability in several ways.

First, it stated that the current education system in Nova Scotia had "simply not worked to help

Nova Scotian students improve their performance. Each model, each situation must be

considered in its own environment, based on performance, coherence, responsibility, and

accountability" (2018, 26). This critique highlighted the need for the education system in Nova

Scotia to change to fit the needs of students rather than continuing with the current model's

expectations that students fit education systems. The report reflected the social model a second

way in the first recommendation: "shift from a system of nine disconnected silos to one coherent,

aligned model, focused on student learning and achievement" (2018, 24). The recommendation

supported the social model because it emphasized the need to have a system designed to benefit

student achievement and learning, which would require the education system to create a new

model that aligned with the needs of students. The recommendation for the creation of a new

education system also supported the social model as it required education systems to change

structures and practices that expected students to fit into a pre-made system and create a new

system that is student-focused instead of promoting student assimilation.

The Students First report (Commission of Inclusive Education, 2018)

 The *Students First report* (2018) exemplified a social model of disability because of the

emphasis the report had on fitting education to students rather than students adapting to

education systems: for example, the report states there is a need for "a unified model of inclusive

public education that responds to all student needs and aligns multiple changes at all levels of the

public school system toward one common goal: increased student success" (Njie et al., 2018,

11). The focus on student needs and success aligned with the social model of disability as the

report noted the need to put students first rather than education systems. The report emphasized

the social model's principle of removing the emphasis on students fitting into schools and the

significance of schools changing to align with students. The report supported a social model in a

second way when it stated that Nova Scotia must move to an inclusive education model that

included a multi-tiered support system (MTSS) for all students. The report suggested an

inclusive education framework, MTSS, which paralleled the social model's fundamental shift

from fitting students into traditional programs and placements to implementing educational

programming for students' unique needs and strengths. The *Students First report* (2018) stated,

"for too long, students have been plugged into established educational programs that do not fully

meet their needs or foster their success (Njie et al., 2018, 10). With this statement, the report

acknowledged the critical understanding of the social model that the education system cannot be

a one-size fits all model. Instead, the education system needs to ensure the success of all students

by promoting a continuum of programs, services, and settings to provide students with effective

interventions, instruction, and learning spaces based on their strengths and needs (Njie et al.,

2018).

The Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019)

The *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019b) demonstrated the medical model in

the policy's focus on individual students' strengths and weaknesses rather than on the challenges

for students created and facilitated by the education system. For example, in the section on

providing support to students, Teaching Support Teams and Student Support Teams were

directed to "collaborate on decisions regarding instruction, interventions, and evaluation needed

to best support individual students through the Program Planning Process, as well as the

support(s), needed to assist the student's teachers in meeting the student's strengths and

challenges" (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019b, 6). The directive(s) did not indicate the need for

the education system or the employees of the education system to restructure or look inward at

teaching methods, structures, or organization as the problem but focused on the individual

student level.

The social model of disability was also reflected in several places in *the Nova Scotia*

Inclusive Education Policy (2019b) policy statement and objectives. One, the policy's primary

focus was on the success and well-being of students through supportive intervention, practices,

and educational staff. Two, although the policy did recommend evaluation/assessment of

students (medical model), there was a greater emphasis on the educational staff ensuring proper

and equitable programming is always provided to the student without mentioning the focus on a

diagnosis (2020). Third, the policy used the social model as it addressed the roles and responsibilities of parents, educational staff, and the community to address equity issues, remove barriers, and create independence for students. The report stated that rather than focusing on what the child cannot do or why they do not fit into pre-set educational standards. This policy described that environments should be adapted to the student rather than the student to the environment.

The BLAC Report on Education (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994)

The *BLAC Report* (1994) demonstrated the social model of disability in multiple sections. It identified that the education system was expecting students to fit the education system rather than accepting and meeting students where they are to ensure their success. Further, the *BLAC Report* (1994) mentioned that streaming, which aligned with the medical model of disability, is usually based on achievement as measured by standardized tests or estimates of a child's ability. Even when streaming was based on the judgement of teachers, students, and parents, it rarely accounted for the differences in family education or circumstances, past school experiences and other factors. It failed to fully consider each student's strengths, weaknesses, and potential" (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994, 43). It also aligned with the social model of disability through the document's recognition of student stereotypes and streaming and how those factors influence student success. The *BLAC Report* (1994) stated streaming stereotypes "students without developing a plan to push them forward. It results in labelling which also has negative consequences" (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994, 43). Streaming also "duplicates inequalities of race, class, and sex that exist throughout our society. The stigmatizing system of classifying students as educationally handicapped is used to punish and marginalize students who resist conformity and, in our society, tends to be applied to large groups of black

learners" (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994, 43). The report's (1994) vision for the education system was for high expectations, the recognition of value, and the development of the skills and talents of all students and recommended that the system be restructured around students to facilitate their success.

The Provincial Mi'kmaq Education Act (Nova Scotia Legislature, 1998)

The *Mi'kmaq Education Act* (1998) contained no indications of the social model or medical model of disability. This may be because the structure of the Act was to give effect to the Agreement of the jurisdiction of the Mi'kmaq of the Province over education (1998, c. 17, s. 2.). The Act did not describe any principles, directives, or guidelines in adaptations, intervention, or assessment.

The Racial Equity Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2002)

The *Racial Equity policy* (2002) reflected the social model of disability by aiming to fit schools to students. The model was apparent in a few statements. One, the policy stated that it aimed to develop "the advancement of racial equity in the education system through its structures of governance, employment, and practices" (Province of Nova Scotia, 2002, 2). As well, the Act aimed to facilitate "the support of learning environments that affirm a learner's inherent right to dignity, security, and self-worth" (Province of Nova Scotia, 2002, 2) and "the provision of programs and services that affirm and advance racial equity for all learners" (Province of Nova Scotia, 2002, 2). Finally, the Act stated it aimed to provide and promote "anti-racism and race relations, cross-cultural understanding, and human rights education within its school system" (Province of Nova Scotia 2002, 2). These statements or principles followed the social model of disability because the Act requires systems, structures, and education to change to fit the needs of students and respect students.

The Special Education Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008)

The *Special Education Policy* (2008) exemplified the social model, because it

emphasized student support services. The policy stated that for students with but not limited to

specific learning disabilities, Attention-Deficit- Hyper-Activity Disorder (ADHD), and

intellectual disabilities, "support services that are designed to meet students' diverse educational

needs should be coordinated with the neighborhood school and, to the extent possible, within

grade level/subject area classrooms. The process by which this goal is achieved is complex and is

dependent on several factors for its success" (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008, 20). The social

model of disability was also represented through the policy's Identification, Assessment, and

Program Planning Process section. Specifically, in stage two, when the policy recognized that

assessment and diagnosis are not always the end goal for all students, "the identification,

assessment, and program planning process may not go beyond this stage for many students, as

their needs may be met through adaptations that support them in achieving provincially approved

curriculum outcomes" (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008). In addition, the policy noted that student

adaptation would require review once a year as students and student needs change over time as it

is necessary to ensure that the adaptations support student success to meet outcomes (Province of

Nova Scotia, 2008).

The *Special Education Policy* (2008) is more aligned with the medical model through the

Program Planning Process, which included an eight-step process that required a student to be

identified with challenges before the process began. The Program Planning Process included

screening, identification, monitoring, assessment, adaptations and IPPs (Province of Nova

Scotia, 2008). The student is moved through each step dependant on the decisions made by the

Program Planning Team. Although there was no mention of diagnosis within the steps, it did not

mention the necessity of change in the structure or organization of education. Instead, it focused on individual programming for students based on information gathered through the Program Planning Process, which included a student's perceived strengths and challenges. The Program Planning Process aligned with the medical model as it attempted to solve the students' perceived challenges through adaptations throughout each step. If the adaptations did not help the student achieve curriculum outcomes, an Individual Program Plan was then considered. If neither of these worked, the student was put back through the Program Planning Process again, reinforcing that the student was the problem or needs to be fixed to meet the education system's preconceived notion of student success.

The Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender-nonconforming Students (Province of Nova Scotia, 2014)

The *Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender non-conforming Students* (2014) did not reflect either the social model or medical model of disability. It focused on specific guidelines for regional centres, teachers, and educational staff to protect the rights of 2S+LGBTQIA students and did not provide any directives or principles regarding diagnosis, intervention, and adaptations.

Nova Scotia Human Rights Act

One document directly referenced the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act:* The *Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender non-conforming Students* (2014). Eight documents implicitly made connection to principles of the Act and/or referenced protected characteristics from the Act: the *Education Act* (2018), the *Raise the Bar* report (2018), the *Students First report* (2018), the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019), the *BLAC Report* (1994), the

Mi'kmaq Education Act (1998), the *Racial Equity policy* (2002), and the *Special Education Policy* (2008).

The Education Act of Nova Scotia (Nova Scotia Legislature, 2018)

The *Education Act* (2018) identified the protection and promotion of three of the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*'s protected characteristics: the rights and interests of African-Nova Scotians, the Mi'kmaq, and "students with special needs." It also outlined "unacceptable behaviour" in the education system, which included discriminatory behaviour and racist behaviour to protect students (2018, c. 1, Sch. A, s. 6.)

The Raise the Bar report (Province of Nova Scotia, 2018)

The *Raise the Bar* report (2018) cited several protected characteristics of the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*, which included students' socio-economic status, race, gender, cultural, and geographic conditions. The *Raise the Bar* report (2018) foundational principles both protected the right of all individuals, and protected students from discrimination, harassment, and exclusion. In addition, the *Raise the Bar* report (2018) acknowledged that "in truly equitable systems, factors such as socio-economic status, race and gender do not truncate students' life chances or prevent them from achieving ambitious outcomes" (Glaze et al., 2018).

The Students First report (Commission of Inclusive Education, 2018)

The *Students First* report (2018) mentioned several shared characteristics from the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*: students with "special needs" or exceptionalities students with "impact of family issues, poverty, regional disparities, language barriers, or entrenched patterns of social inequity" (Njie et al., 2018, 11). Moreover, the report aligned with the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act* where it mentioned that for Nova Scotia Schools to be inclusive, it was necessary to address issues of "social inequity, valuing and promoting diversity of all types, breaking down

barriers, and creating welcoming schools and classrooms that support the full membership, participation, and citizenship of all learners" (Njie et al., 2018, 123).

The Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019)

The *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019) mentioned several protected characteristics that aligned with the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act* within its guiding principles: "students who are historically marginalized and racialized (African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaw students) or students who come from other groups that have been traditionally under-represented and under-served, including, but not limited to, students with special needs and those struggling with poverty" (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019b, 2). It was aligned with the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act* because of the focus on equity and education for all students and outlining students from marginalized groups who may face discrimination: the policy's objective statement is to "ensure every student has access to an equitable and high-quality education that is culturally and linguistically responsive, accepting, and respectful in supporting and valuing their learning and diverse abilities" (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019b, 2). Another objective stated that "all partners are committed and empowered to work collectively to identify and eliminate barriers that interfere with students' well-being and achievement" (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019b, 2).

The BLAC Report on education (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994)

The *BLAC Report* (1994) aligned with the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act* through a shared understanding of protected characteristics, specifically marginalized groups. The *BLAC Report's* (1994) goal was to have an "education system which is capable and competent to work with each individual child in full recognition of their resources- social, intellectual, and physical" (32). The focus was on African Nova Scotian children, which aligned with the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act's* protected characteristics. The *BLAC Report* (1994) further demonstrated a

connection to the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act* as the report emphasized future education systems "in which all people, regardless of race, language, gender, or economic status live with pride and dignity; and enjoy fully and equally all opportunities for education, employment, recognition, and fulfillment" (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994, 32).

The Provincial Mi'kmaq Education Act (Nova Scotia Legislature, 1998)

The *Mi'kmaq Education Act* (1998) connected to the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act* through its focus on Mi'kmaq or Mi'kmaq education (1998, c. 17, s. 2.).

The Racial Equity Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2002)

The *Racial Equity Policy* (2002) exemplified the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*; the policy identified multiple protected characteristics from the Act: "social groups based on such characteristics as race, ethnicity, nationality, language, faith, gender, ability, or sexual orientation that leads to the inequitable treatment of members of the targeted groups" (2002, 27). Further, the *Racial Equity Policy* (2002) reflected the foundational principles of the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*. The first principle referenced was the right to respect and dignity through the policy's directives: "recognizing the inherent and inalienable rights to dignity, respect, security, and worth of all individuals, the fundamental principle that all Nova Scotians have a right to an equitable education that respects their first culture, and the advancement of equity, human rights, and fundamental freedoms as central to the full development of the person" (2002, 27). The policy aligned with another foundational principle of the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act* through the policy's acknowledgment of the impact of discrimination: "discrimination, backed by institutional power, results in the effects of withholding and limiting access to the rights, freedoms, privileges, opportunities, benefits, and advantages that are available to other members of society (27).

The Special Education Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008)

The *Special Education Policy* (2008) cited several protected characteristics of the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act* and the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The *Special Education Policy* (2008) stated that "every individual before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability" (15). Further, the *Special Education Policy* (2008) recognized the fundamental right to education of all students through the statement: "right to appropriate education means the fundamental educational human right of every individual to have their unique learning needs responded to on an individual basis" (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008, 5). The policy referenced students' fundamental right to education a second time when it stated, "the Nova Scotia Department of Education recognized and endorses the basic right of all students to full and equal participation in education" (3).

The Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender-nonconforming Students (Province of Nova Scotia, 2014)

The *Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender non-conforming Students* (2014) directly cited the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*:

> In December 2012, the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act* was amended to specifically incorporate the protection of transgender people from discrimination. Under the act, it is illegal to discriminate based on gender identity and gender expression. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development developed the following guidelines, in keeping with the new legislation, to help school board superintendents, school board administrators, and schools to create a culture that is safe, respectful, and supportive for

transgender and gender-nonconforming students (Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender non-conforming Students, 2014, 1).

Nova Scotia Accessibility Act

None of the documents explicitly referenced the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act*: a number of the documents predated the Act, but even the more recent documents did not cite it. Four documents or Acts exemplified implicit understandings that aligned with the built environment section of the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act*: the *Raise the Bar* report *(2018),* the *Students First report* (2018), the *Special Education Policy* (2008), and the *Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender non-conforming Students* (2014). Seven documents demonstrated implicit understandings that aligned with the education section of the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act:* The *Students First report* (2018): the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019), the *Education Act* (2018), the *Raise the Bar* report (2018), the *BLAC Report* (1994), the *Racial Equity policy* (2002), and he *Special Education Policy* (2008). One document did not reflect education or built environment section of the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act, the *Mi'kmaq Education Act* (1998). It focused only on the rights of the reserve to educate residents.

Built Environment Section of the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act*

The Raise the Bar report (Province of Nova Scotia, 2018)

The *Raise the Bar* report (2018) reflected the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act's* built environment section through recommendation 13, which mandated the school board to provide an accessible recreational and group activities venue. Another place where the report reflected the built environment section was through recommending that there be an accessible place for the community to gather, volunteer, access community programs, be physically active, and develop skills (Glaze et al., 2002).

The Students First report (Commission of Inclusive Education, 2018)

The *Students First report* (2018) reflected the built environment section by stating that school environments must be considered for inclusive education to be accessible to everyone. The report elaborated on this statement in the section on specialized equipment and learning spaces by stating that specialized equipment and learning spaces would allow students to participate in learning, access curriculum, and interact with students and teachers (Njie et al., 2018). Both the specialized equipment and learning spaces section and the built environment section focused on the need to support students through inclusive environments and suit environments to student needs. The *Students First report* (2018) reflected the need to suit the environment for students through the specialized equipment section such as adapted furniture, assistive technology, mobility aids, and adjusted lighting and sound amplification systems (Njie et al., 2018). Further, the report recommended that schools should have specialized learning spaces in classrooms and throughout the school to accommodate one-on-one instruction, specialized equipment, and small group settings (Njie et al., 2018).

The Special Education Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008)

The *Special Education Act (*2008) reflected the built environment section of the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act* through its statement 1.2: School Building Access: "The department of education and school boards are responsible for ensuring that all new school buildings or major renovations of existing buildings provide equal access for all" (9).

The Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender-nonconforming Students (Province of Nova Scotia, 2014)

The Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender non-conforming Students (2014) aligned with the built environment section of the *Nova Scotia Accessibility* Act in the statement:

> where possible, schools should provide an easily accessible gender-neutral, single-stall washroom for use by *any* student who desires increased privacy, regardless of the underlying reason (medical, religious, cultural, gender identity, etc.). "Accessible" refers to a non-stigmatizing location within the school, a non-stigmatizing process for access, and physical accessibility for someone with a wheelchair (2014, 15).

Education Section of the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act*

The Education Act of Nova Scotia (Nova Scotia Legislature, 2018)

The *Education Act* (2018) supported the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act* education section through its focus on students with disabilities having equitable participation, access to instruction, and learning materials and the general duty to "provide for the education and instruction of all students enrolled in its schools and programs" and "establish a provincial policy respecting special- education programming and services" (2018, c. 1, Sch. A, s. 6., 30). It further stated that regional centres have the duty to "students with special needs" by "developing and implementing educational programs for students with special needs within regular instructional settings with their peers in age" (2018, c. 1, Sch. A, s. 6., 28)

The Raise the Bar report (Province of Nova Scotia, 2018)

The *Raise the Bar* report (2018) aligned with the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act* education section as both emphasized the importance of providing students with learning environments where students can participate, receive instruction, and learning materials. The *Raise the Bar*

report (2018) stressed the importance of learning environments by stating that the Nova Scotia education system needed to build "a coherent system that will allow teachers and resources to move more quickly and readily across the system to ensure equity in student outcomes" (2018, 24). The *Raise the Bar* report (2018) stated that the system must be "realigned to reflect a unified, coordinated, province-wide focus on students" (2018, 24).

The Students First report (Commission of Inclusive Education, 2018)

The *Students First* (2018) report connected to the education section of *the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act* when it noted the importance of adapted learning materials, which are resources created or changed to meet diverse student needs to facilitate the participation and learning of all students in the classroom (Njie et al., 2018): "When school facilities, equipment, curricula, assessments, and instructional materials are readily accessible and usable by everyone, schools become more inclusive by design" (Towle, 2015).

The Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019)

The *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019) and the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act* aligned on the foundation that students should have access to learning environments where all students can participate; both referenced the need to provide students with disabilities with quality instruction and learning materials (Nova Scotia Accessibility Act, 2019).

The BLAC Report on education (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994)

The *BLAC Report* (1994) connected to the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act* education section as both emphasized the importance of access to material: "we envision the teaching and learning materials used in the school system reflecting a multi-racial society that values the positive contributions of all its members" (16).

The Racial Equity Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2002)

The *Racial Equity policy* (2002) aligned with the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act* education section because the policy outlined its directive on an equitable curriculum and access to equitable learning materials. *The policy also* aligned with the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act* education section in its statement that "educational programs and services and the teaching and learning environments must not only be sensitive to the culture and heritage of learners but actively promote the principles contained in the Racial Equity policy guidelines" (2002, 5).

The Special Education Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008)

The *Special Education Act* (2008) aligned with the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act's* education section guidelines on access to materials through its recommendations for equipment and materials: "Boards may use funds from the special education grant to purchase or rent specialized equipment and materials for the purposes of educational programming" (12).

Terminology

The documents were analyzed for terms such as students with disabilities, "special needs," "students with special educational needs," or other terms that described, categorized, or classified students with disabilities. Four documents explicitly used the term "special needs": the *Education Act* (2018), the *Students First report* (2018), the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019), and the *Special Education Policy* (2008). The *Students First report* (2018) and the *Special Education Policy* (2008) also used the term "exceptionalities" in addition to "special needs." Five documents did not reference students with disabilities: the *Raise the Bar* report (2018), the *BLAC Report* (1994), the *Mi'kmaq Education Act* (1998), the *Racial Equity policy* (2002), and the *Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender non-conforming Students* (2014)

The Education Act of Nova Scotia (Nova Scotia Legislature, 2018)

The *Education Act* (2018) used the terminology students with "special needs" to describe students who would qualify as students with disabilities but did not outline the groups of students categorized by this term.

The Students First report (Commission of Inclusive Education, 2018)

The *Students First report* (2018) used the language "special needs" and "exceptionalities," which encompass students with "Specific learning disabilities, ADHD, chronic health impairment, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), emotional, mental health and/or behavioural disorder, speech/language/communication disorders, Vision loss, Hearing loss, deaf-blindness, physical disability/motor impairment, intellectual disability, acquired brain injury, multiple disabilities/complex needs, giftedness" (Njie et al., 2018, 38).

The Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019)

The *Nova Scotia Inclusion Policy* (2019) used the terminology students with "special needs," but did not specifically state students who are categorized by this term.

The Special Education Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008)

The *Special Education Policy* (2008) used the terms "special needs" and "exceptionalities" to encompass students with "cognitive impairments, motional/ behavioral disorders, learning disabilities, physical disabilities and/ or health impairments, speech impairments and or communication disorders, sensory impairments-vision, hearing, multiple disabilities, and giftedness" (11).

Both the *Students First report* (2018) and the *Special Education Policy* (2008) used "disability" in the descriptions of diagnoses but used "special needs" and "exceptionalities" as umbrella terms.

Recommendations

In the first portion of this recommendation section, I provide an overview of the recommendations from each document. Later in this section, I outline the recommendations from each document that were identified that either specifically mentioned school psychologists or were relevant to the competencies of school psychologists. The rationale for having a section for general recommendations was to provide an understanding of the document's overall recommendations for inclusive education in Nova Scotia. The rationale for having a specific section that focused on the recommendations that may apply to school psychologists' competencies was to outline the possible roles and responsibilities school psychologists could have in inclusive education. One report's recommendations mentioned school psychologists: the *Students First report* (2018). The *Mi'kmaq Education Act* (1998), and the *Education Act (*2018) did not have any recommendations.

The Raise the Bar report (Province of Nova Scotia, 2018)

As described earlier, the *Raise the Bar* report (2018) organized the recommendations for the report into six groups with several related, individual strategies that were called *Catalysts for Change*. The first catalyst was to organize the system to focus on student learning and achievement, which included one aligned model focusing on student learning and achievement (Glaze et al., 2018). A recommendation under catalyst one was to maintain the Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial board structure. Catalyst two focused on concentrating needed resources in classrooms and schools and included recommendations to put support specialists into classrooms, encourage cross-fertilization between the Education Department and schools, and make schools "wrap-around" facilities for interdisciplinary support for students and families (Glaze et al., 2018). The final recommendation for the second catalyst stated the school board

should give funding responsibility for learning materials to teachers and principals. Catalyst three was to improve the system for teachers and principals and consisted of recommendations such as a provincial College of Educators.

Other recommendations included removing principals and vice-principals from the Nova Scotia Teachers Union (NSTU), creating more maintenance and operations positions, providing support for accounting and financial functions in schools, and creating a coordinated professional development system in schools across Nova Scotia (Glaze et al., 2018). Catalyst four focused on increasing trust, accountability, and transparency, with recommendations to develop an independent Student Progress Assessment Office (SPAO) and establish an Education Ombudsperson (Glaze et al., 2018). Catalyst five included ensuring equity and excellence in all schools across the province by creating a new Executive Director or similar position, a unit dedicated to collaborating with the Office of Immigration, and a coordinated workforce strategy to identify, recruit and retain teachers, support staff, and specialists (Glaze et, al., 2018). The fourth recommendation from catalyst five included developing targeted education strategies for French Language Education, Rural Education, students living in poverty, and children in care (Glaze et al., 2018). Finally, catalyst six includes streamlining the Department's administration and operations and investing savings in the classroom through a new funding formula, documented and shared financial savings (Glaze et al., 2018).

The Students First document (Commission of Inclusive Education, 2018)

The *Students First report* (2018) recommended that MTSS serve as a unified framework for public education to align and coordinate the education system around student success, to provide all students "with multiple tiers of support, including varied assessments, instruction, interventions, and learning spaces tailored to individual student strengths and needs. Recommendations from the *Students First report* (2018) included an inclusive education policy for all Nova Scotia students with "special needs," inclusive education defined in relation to equity in student programming through varied programs, services, and settings, and detailed roles and responsibilities outlined for students, parents, educators, government departments, and agencies (Njie et al., 2018). The recommendations from the *Students First report* (2018) were separated into three categories: targeted funding, access to specialists, and better support recommendations. Targeted funding recommendations consisted of core funding for inclusive education, school psychology and speech-language pathology assessments, needs-based funding formula, and for teachers to complete specialist training (Njie et al., 2018). Access to specialists' recommendations included school psychologists, behaviour support teachers, speech-language pathologists, and guidance counsellors. Finally, the report's better support recommendations encompassed behaviour, mental health, and autism strategies, alongside parent support, staff education, and communication (Njie et al., 2018).

The Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019)

In the case of the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education policy* (2019b), there were no recommendations but nine directives that outlined what was expected of schools and educational staff to create an inclusive school. The nine directives included areas of responsibility such as using evidence and disaggregated data to monitor and evaluate students through the Student

Success Planning process and teachers being responsible for teaching and providing interventions to all students in a common learning environment (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019b). Learning support teachers were also responsible for direct, collaborative support to classroom teachers and students by developing and implementing strategies to promote students' well-being and achievement. The Teaching Support Team was responsible for problems facing teachers and for identifying staff, resources, and strategies that could help teachers effectively support their students, moreover, evaluate the success of these supports and interventions (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019b). A second team, the Student Planning Team, was responsible for supporting the identified learning strengths and challenges, achievement, and well-being of individual students. The Teaching Support Team and Student Planning Team was deemed in charge of providing flexible programming and support to best support well-being and achievement (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019b). Teachers were responsible for providing linguistic and culturally responsive classroom practices to support students. Every school was charged with supporting students through a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). Finally, every employee was mandated to adhere to the principles of inclusive education (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019b).

The BLAC Report on education (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994)

The *BLAC Report* (1994) outlined recommendations for the education system. The Minister was given the responsibility for providing available scholarships, black role models/ support through the hiring process for Black learners and establishing a mechanism to monitor the implementation of Multiracial and Anti-Racism policies in schools (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994). Moreover, the Minister of Education was provided with the recommendations to communicate and enforce equity and anti-racist standards and provide $50,000 to every

School Board for implementation, create programs, resources, and learning materials for Black learners in the curriculum. The Minister of Education and the Education Department's responsibilities included quality preschool opportunities, scholarships for professional programs, parental involvement, and financial support for African Canadians (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994).

Further responsibilities included providing enrichment programs for Black students, exploration of financial assistance, sponsor cross-cultural and anti-racism training programs, and guidelines for evaluating materials (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994). The *BLAC Report* (1994) also outlined collaboration with communities, communication academic expectations, link upgrading and job skills training, and program monitoring as responsibilities of the Minister of Education and the Education Department. In addition, extending the time frames at the Learning Centres to meet the needs of learners, creating alternative discipline measures, and getting parents engaged as active participants (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994). General recommendations for responsibilities for the province were outlined as developing support systems on the community college campuses, Human Resources Development Canada should provide increasing allowances for people in training, recruitment of African Nova Scotian students to community colleges, and increase access to the apprenticeship program from African Nova Scotians (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994).

The Racial Equity Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2002)

The *Racial Equity Policy* (2002) did not provide recommendations but principles to guide policy implementation. Most of the principles related to roles and responsibilities held by the Department of Education rather than individual roles and responsibilities of general employees of the education system. The first principle of the policy was Equitable Environment in the

Department which mandated that the Department of Education create and implement policies, procedures, and practices in employment, staff development, program development, and service delivery to advance racial equity at all levels in the department (Province of Nova Scotia, 2002). The second principle was the Equitable Curriculum, which maintained that the Department of Education creates and supports a curriculum sensitive and respectful to learners' heritage and culture through recognition of student's rights, representation of racial/ethnocultural groups, and teaching practices that acknowledge the power of language, culture, and identities in learning and achievement (Province of Nova Scotia, 2002). The third principle was Equitable Assessment, which entailed supporting and advancing assessment that affirms racial equity for all learners, including collaboration, evaluation, and implementation of assessments and evaluations (Province of Nova Scotia, 2002). Fourth was Equitable Instructional Practices, which entailed the Department of Education supporting and advancing instructional practices that affirm racial equity for all learners, such as classroom instructional practices, instructional evaluations, and professional development (Province of Nova Scotia, 2002).

Respect and Affirmation of the Learner's First Language was the following principle entailed valuing and respecting a learner's first language and providing services that value a learner's first language and promote students' linguistic knowledge. The sixth principle was Equitable Counselling and Learner Development, which gave the Department of Education the responsibility to support counselling, guidance, and career and personal planning (Province of Nova Scotia, 2002). The policy outlined Equitable Learning Environments as the seventh principle, which deemed the Department of Education responsible for the commitment to provide learning environments that advance equity for all learners (Province of Nova Scotia, 2002). Finally, principle eight, Equitable Community Relations, included the Department of

Education's responsibility to engage in equitable practices with partners in the education system and the broader community, including effective collaboration and partnerships to meet the needs of learners (Province of Nova Scotia, 2002).

The Special Education Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008)

The *Special Education Policy* (2008) outlined several guidelines for the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Education and educational staff. The Department of Education was deemed responsible for creating guidelines and policies regarding programming and services for students with special needs, the formula funding grant, providing equal access for all to school buildings, and monitoring matters affecting educational progress, comfort, and health of all students (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008). School boards were deemed responsible for providing an appropriate education for all students in their jurisdiction, designating administrative responsibility for special education programming and services, and creating and implementing policy for services for students with special needs (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008). School boards were also charged with developing an appeal process to ministerial education act regulations and the education act and providing appropriate programming for all students with special needs.

Moreover, each school board was deemed responsible for creating a process of identification, assessment, program planning, and evaluation for students with "special needs," ensuring individual program planning teams are developed for students with "special needs," and informing parents about decisions in respect to their child (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008). Responsibilities continued at the school board level, which included individual program plans (IPPs), transition planning, procedures of evaluations of programs and services, and providing access to records (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008). Further, school boards were mandated to keep

parents informed, collaborate in the program planning process, provide programs and services

for students with special needs, and participate in interdepartmental and interagency

collaborative efforts (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008).

The Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender-nonconforming Students (Province

of Nova Scotia, 2014)

The *Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender non-conforming Students* (2014)

document provided several recommendations:

1. Support the student's individual process

2. Use the student's preferred name(s) and pronoun(s)

3. Maintain records consistent with legal practice

4. Ensure dress codes support the full expression of the student's gender identity

5. Minimize gender-segregated activities

6. Enable full and safe participation in physical education classes and extracurricular activities,

including athletics, in accordance with the student's gender identity

7. Provide safe access to washroom and change-room facilities in accordance with the student's

gender identity (2014, 9-15).

Recommendations Relevant to School Psychologists

The following recommendations may be relevant to school psychologists'

competencies. The rationale for selecting specific recommendations that may map on to the

competencies of school psychologists was if the skills, knowledge, and ability listed in a

competency met the requirements of the recommendation or could satisfy the recommendation.

Several competencies appeared relevant as they applied to many recommendations, like

consultation (CPA & MRA), collaboration (CPA Ed Psy Doc), and assessment and evaluation/psycho-educational assessment (CPA, MRA, NSBEP, CPA Ed Psy Doc).

In addition, intervention (CPA, NSBEP, MRA, CPA Ed Psy Doc) and research (MRA, NSBEP, CPA Ed Psy Doc) frequently appeared throughout recommendations that may be relevant to school psychologists in facilitating inclusive education (See table 3). The recommendations identified include:

The *Students First report* (Commission of Inclusive Education, 2018)

The *Students First* report (2018) provided goals and catalysts for change rather than recommendations. There were four catalyst goals that may be relevant to school psychologists. Home and school collaboration:

Goal 1: Expand on practices that support parents' and educators' collaboration.

Goal 2: Ensure that parents have a voice when decisions are made

Better support:

Goal 2: Create new preparation and professional development programs in inclusive education for teachers, administrators, and teacher assistants.

Goal 3: Improve transition supports. At every stage of the student's journey, supports must be provided to help students and their families adjust to new environments, whether a new school, a new grade, or the community after graduation.

MTSS was not stated as a goal or catalyst of the report but was referenced as an overall recommendation to the Nova Scotia education system.

The Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019)

The *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education policy* (2019b) did not have recommendations but rather directives. There were five directives that may be relevant to school psychologists.

5.1 As part of the Student Success Planning process, every school will use evidence, including disaggregated data, to monitor and evaluate how students are doing and will respond with appropriate, timely supports. These identified supports will be supported by the Teaching Support Team at each school.

5.5 Schools will establish Student Planning Teams, as needed, to support the identified learning strengths and challenges and/or ongoing well-being and achievement of individual students.

5.4 Every school will establish a Teaching Support Team that will meet frequently to address immediate issues facing teachers and quickly identify resources, people, and strategies that can help those teachers more effectively support their students. The team, in collaboration with the classroom teacher, will monitor and evaluate the success of these supports and interventions. Principals or vice principals will lead the teams, which will also include learning support teachers. Teachers will attend if discussions involve their classroom, students, or teaching practices.

5.6 The Teaching Support Team and Student Planning Teams will ensure that plans are flexible in terms of how and where programing and supports are delivered to best support well-being and achievement. Teams will be created in ways that make the most sense within the school.

5.8 Every school will support student well-being and achievement through a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

The *BLAC Report on education* (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994)

The BLAC Report (1994) had two recommendations that may be relevant to school psychologists.

10: Establish student assessment and testing instruments and practices that recognizing racial, cultural, and gender diversity.

19: Watch the progress of Black children as early as grade primary and focus on assistance with basic skills in reading and mathematics.

The *Special Education Policy* (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008)

The Special Education policy (2008) had guidelines rather than recommendations. There were two guidelines that may be relevant to school psychologists.

2.4 Each school is responsible for involving and informing parents with respect to decision regarding assessments designed for their child.

2.7 Transition planning is part of the individual program planning process for each student with special needs.

The *Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender-nonconforming Students* (Province of Nova Scotia, 2014)

The Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender non-conforming Students (2014) provided guidelines rather than recommendations. There were two guidelines that may be relevant to school psychologists.

1. Support the student's individual process.

2. Use the student's preferred name(s) and pronoun(s).

Multi-tiered Systems of Support

Only two documents referenced MTSS: *the Students First document (Commission of Inclusive Education, 2018)* and t*he Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019)*.

The Students First report (Commission of Inclusive Education, 2018)

The *Students First* report (2018) proposed that MTSS be the new model of inclusive education for Nova Scotia. The *Students First* (2018) report detailed that the MTSS model is anchored in a new definition of inclusive education that goes beyond the traditional programs and placements to provide all students with multiple tiers of support. The proposed MTSS model included varied assessments, instruction, interventions, and learning spaces tailored to individual student strengths and needs. It focused on classroom instruction, more support for teaching and learning, and the importance of using evidence-based programs (Njie et al., 2018, 5). The goal was to provide students with fluid, and flexible learning supports provided in the three tiers of MTSS (Njie et al., 2018).

The Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019)

The Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy (2019) mentioned MTSS by stating that every school will support student achievement and well-being through MTSS. The policy defined MTSS as a framework that "ensures effective instruction, assessment, and support for all students with a focus on well-being and achievement." (Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy, 2019b, 4).

School Psychologists

School psychologists were explicitly mentioned in three documents: the *Students First report* (2018), the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019), and the *Special Education Policy* (2008). One document implicitly mentioned school psychologists: the *Education Act* (2018).

The Education Act of Nova Scotia (Nova Scotia Legislature, 2018)

School psychologists were not directly named in the *Education Act* (2018) but implicit in the definition of support staff as "persons employed in any capacity to assist a Regional Centre in providing services for the comfort, assistance, safety and conveyance of students or to provide administrative support to the Regional Center and its schools but does not include a teacher" (2018, c. 1, Sch. A, s. 6., 6). As support staff, school psychologists would have the duty to support all students participating in school activities, maintain an attitude of concern for students, collaborate with other educational staff, support other staff members, and participate in professional development (2018, c. 1, Sch. A, s. 52).

The Students First document (Commission of Inclusive Education, 2018)

The *Students First report* (2018) stated that school psychologists play a role in in-class services and support by providing services in the classroom to support and teach teachers; school psychologists can work directly with students and assist teachers in meeting the needs of their students (Njie et al., 2018). As well, the report stated that school psychologists can be effective in specialized Programs and Services by providing evidence-based, targeted assessments and interventions that are provided to students to help with the development of students' academic, social-emotional, behavioural, and communication skills. For example, Njie et al. (2018) stated that school psychologists could offer their wide range of support through Tier 2 (Njie et al.,

2018). School psychologists were also mentioned throughout the recommendations that there were not enough to service school staff and students and that new inclusive education policies should aim to reduce their caseload; their ratio should go from one school psychologist to 1800 students to one to 1500 (Njie et al., 2018).

The Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019)

The *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education policy* (2019) referred to school psychologists as "support staff." The report described the role of the support staff in the document as follows: "These professionals work with Teaching Support Teams to support teachers in improving their teaching practices and to provide individual support to the students that need them" (Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy, 2019b, 3).

The Special Education Policy (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008)

In the *Special Education policy* (2008), school psychologists were defined as "school psychologists hired after 1984, possession of a master's degree or equivalent degree in psychology that is acceptable to the Board of Examiners and at least six years of supervised professional experience in the field in a manner satisfactory to the Board, or a doctoral degree and two years' supervised professional experience in the field in a manner satisfactory to the Board, are required for certification (Psychologist Act 1980, c. 12, 5.1). In another section of the policy, school psychologists were identified as "professional assistance in assessment, program planning, implementation, and professional development" (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008, 14). School psychologists were mentioned a third time as a member of human resources and "consultants to teachers' in exploration for instructional and behavioural strategies" (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008, 24).

Professionals

For each document, a list was constructed of the different professionals and paraprofessionals in the education system who were referenced. It was also identified whether their roles and responsibilities were described, either explicitly or implicitly (See Table 4). Within the policies, documents, reports, and acts, five referenced principals and vice principals. Two documents provided explicit roles and responsibilities and three provided implicit roles and responsibilities. One report provided implicit roles and responsibilities for teaching support specialists. As for teachers, their roles and responsibilities were outlined within five documents, three provided explicit roles and responsibilities and three provided implicit roles and responsibilities. Learning support teachers were given explicit roles and responsibilities in one document. Teaching assistants were mentioned in one report and provided implicit roles and responsibilities. As for guidance counsellors, they were mentioned with implicit roles throughout four documents.

Behaviour interventionists were given implicit roles and responsibilities in one report. Support specialists were mentioned in one report with explicit roles and responsibilities and employees of the public education system were provided with both explicit and implicit roles and responsibilities in two documents. In two documents, speech language pathologists were provided implicit roles and responsibilities. Mi'kmaq support staff and African Nova Scotian support staff were given implicit roles and responsibilities in one document. SchoolsPlus were provided with implicit roles and responsibilities from one report. Student services and itinerant teacher were provided with implicit roles and responsibilities in one document. Support staff's role was mentioned in one act and was provided with explicit roles and responsibilities. Finally,

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representative of agencies involved were provided implicit roles and responsibilities in one document.

Explicit roles and responsibilities were clearly defined and outlined. In contrast, implicit roles and responsibilities were a mix of a document having multiple professionals grouped with unclear, vague, or general descriptions for professionals. Seven documents mentioned the roles and responsibilities of other professionals: the *Education Act* (2018), the *Raise the Bar* report (2018), the *Students First report* (2018), the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019), the *Racial Equity policy* (2002), the *Special Education Policy* (2008), and the *Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender non-conforming Students* (2014). Twenty different professionals and paraprofessionals were cited in these documents: teachers, principals, vice-principals, teaching assistants, resource teachers, guidance counsellors, behaviour interventionists, support specialists, employees of the public education system, speech-language pathologists, African Nova Scotian Support Staff, Mi'kmaq support staff, SchoolsPlus, Student Services, itinerant teacher, support staff, representative of agencies involved.

An example of some explicit roles and responsibilities are from the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019), which stated teachers must "value student voice and choice and provide opportunities for them to speak to their strengths, challenges, and preferred ways of learning, assess and evaluate the effectiveness of their instructional strategies, and work with parents/guardians to understand their preferred ways of working with teachers, principals, and other staff, and make efforts to accommodate it" (6). A second example was for principals and vice-principals in the *Education Act* (2018) which stated they must "ensure that the public-school program and curricula are implemented, communicate regularly with the parents of students, and encourage teachers and other staff of the school, students and parents to participate in school

decision-making through school advisory councils" (2018, c. 1, Sch. A, s., 39). An example of some implicit roles and responsibilities were in the *Students First report* (2018), which stated "it's the role and responsibility of everyone working in schools to ensure decisions are in the student's best interest of the student(s) through collaborative, problem-solving processes" (Njie et al., 2018, 63). This directive included teachers, principals, speech-language pathologists, school psychologists, and other professional.

<center>**Discussion**</center>

Introduction

      This thesis aimed to provide an understanding of Nova Scotia school psychologists'

possible roles and responsibilities in inclusive education in Nova Scotia. Currently, there is a

limited information and direction on school psychologists' roles and responsibilities in inclusive

education in Nova Scotia and in research on inclusive education. Understanding school

psychologists' possible roles and responsibilities in inclusive education is critical as inclusive

education has become the education system's primary focus and goal for policy and systematic

change.

Summary of Findings

      This section provides a summary of the major findings from the analysis in relation to the

literature. Nine documents were analyzed: the *Education Act* (2018), the *Raise the Bar* report

(2018), the *Students First report* (2018), the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019),

the *BLAC Report* (1994), the *Mi'kmaq Education Act* (1998), the *Racial Equity policy* (2002),

the *Special Education Policy* (2008), and the *Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender*

non-conforming Students (2014). Each document was analyzed with several factors: the

document's conceptualization, or definition of inclusive education; if the document exemplified

the social model or medical model of disability (or a combination); the document's connection to

the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act, specifically, if protected characteristics were identified in

the document and the connection to protecting the protected characteristics; the document's

connection to the goal and recommendations of the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act's built

environment and education sections; the terminology used by the document to describe students

(e.g., "disability" or "student with special educational needs (SEN)"); if the document provided

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recommendations and if the document was connected to the MTSS framework; if the document noted school psychologists and, if so, in what context(s) and what other professionals and paraprofessionals were mentioned and their responsibilities; examining the competencies held by school psychologists (See Table 1) and identifying recommendations from the documents that may be relevant to school psychologists' competencies.

Conceptualization of Inclusive Education

Out of the nine documents analyzed, only three directly defined inclusion or inclusive education, and four provided principles or guidelines that aligned with the foundations of inclusive education: the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019b), the *Students First report* (2018), and the *Special Education policy* (2008). There was no uniformity in definitions across acts, policies, reports, and documents, and two did not provide an inclusive education definition. The lack of consistency in definitions of inclusive education is aligned with the literature in that there is no standard or universal definition or understanding of inclusive education (Krischler, Powell, and Pit-Ten Cate, 2019). Njie et al. (2018) also stated that no universal or standard definition of inclusive education exists in Nova Scotia. Njie et al. (2018) noted that the slow progression of inclusive education in Nova Scotia might be contributed to the inconsistency and lack of clarity of an inclusive definition. In addition, the implementation of inclusive education in Nova Scotia, along with the inconsistent definition, has caused documents, procedures, and terminology to be interpreted and used differently across the province, which has created further confusion for the education system, students, parents, and educational staff (Njie et al., 2018).

Social Model and Medical Model of Disability

Seven documents demonstrated an understanding of the social model of disability, four reflected the medical model of disability, and four exemplified both the social and medical model. The seven documents, acts, and reports were the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019), the *Students First report* (2018), the *Raise the Bar* report (2018), the *Education Act* (2018), the *Racial Equity policy* (2002), and the *Special Education Policy* (2008), the *BLAC Report* (1994). The documents aligned with the social model outlined critical understandings from the literature. These understandings included looking at the education system and the structures surrounding students as the issue rather than viewing the individual student as the issue. Similar to the research, documents identified the disadvantages the structures and systems create for students with or without disabilities (Crow, 1996; Mittler, 2000; Triano, 2000). Additionally, the documents that demonstrated the social model aligned with the literature because of their focus on looking to structure education systems around student needs rather than "fixing" students to meet the premade expectations and standards of the education system and disadvantaging them on perceived weaknesses (Morris 1996 & Silvers, 1998).

Much like the literature, the documents that did have sections, guidelines, or principles that demonstrated aspects of the medical model placed a heavy focus or emphasis on either fixing or "curing" (Goering 2015) the perceived weakness or challenges of the student. Comparably to the literature, the medical model of disability presented in the documents placed the problem at the individual student level and attempted to fit or adapt the student into the education system rather than focusing on restructuring education to fit the needs of students (Goering, 2015).

Nova Scotia Human Rights Act

Only one document directly referenced the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*, the

Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender non-conforming Students (2014). Eight

other documents, reports, and acts implicitly connected to the act's principles and referenced

protected characteristics from the Act; the *Education Act* (2018), the *Raise the Bar* report (2018),

the *Students First report* (2018), the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019), the *BLAC*

Report (1994), the *Mi'kmaq Education Act* (1998), the *Racial Equity policy* (2002), and the

Special Education Policy (2008). The analyzed documents focused on dignity, respect, and

equitable treatment, aligned with the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act's* purpose to recognize the

inherent dignity and equal rights of all humans (Nova Scotia Human Rights Act, 2013).

Similar to the literature, the documents that provided direct reference or an implicit

connection to the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act* exemplified the importance of reflecting and

valuing student diversity (United Nations, 2015). Moreover, the documents' explicit reference

and implicit connections focused on dismantling systematic barriers to suit environments to the

needs of students, which is seen as a human right from a social justice perspective (United

Nations, 2015). In addition, the documents' conceptualizations or definitions demonstrated the

social justice and human rights perspective by including equitable and quality education for all

students. The focus on equitable and quality education in education systems from the documents

agrees with the literature focus on having human rights perspective in inclusive education. For

example, the UN's *Sustainable Development Goals* include promoting lifelong learning

opportunities for students with equitable and quality education (United Nations, 2015). It is

important to mention that only one document referenced the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*; it

may be that inclusive education in Nova Scotia is still attempting to facilitate inclusive education through the lens of human rights and social justice perspectives but may not be aware of the power the act has in inclusive education.

Nova Scotia Accessibility Act

Four documents or Acts exemplified implicit understandings that aligned with the built environment section of the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act* through recommendations, mandated responsibilities, and principles. Those documents were the *Raise the Bar* report *(2018),* the *Students First report* (2018), the *Special Education Policy* (2008), and the *Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender non-conforming Students* (2014). Seven documents demonstrated implicit understandings that aligned with the education section of the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act* within the documents' directives, principles, or guidelines. These documents included The *Students First report* (2018): the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019), the *Education Act* (2018), the *Raise the Bar* report (2018), the *BLAC Report* (1994), the *Racial Equity policy* (2002), and he *Special Education Policy* (2008). It is critical to note that the documents' connections to the built environment and education sections aligned with the foundational principles of inclusive education.

The documents that exemplified implicit understandings of the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act* also aligned with the literature on inclusive environments. The documents that implicitly referenced to the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act* built environment section referenced key aspects of inclusive environments literature, such as accessible venues and environments, specialized equipment and learning materials, and building access (Parekh, 2014). Further, documents with implicit understandings of the built environment section agreed with the literature as documents stated the need for a non-stigmatizing process for student access, which aligns with definitions of

physical inclusive education in the literature (Parekh, 2014). In addition, documents acknowledged that inclusive education is more than the physical placement of students, which aligned with the literature that inclusive education is not about placement but rather the degree to which students are included in school environments (Parekh, 2014; Whitley & Hollweck, 2020).

As for the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act* education section, the documents that implicitly referenced the section aligned with the literature on equitable inclusive education. The documents that implicitly referenced the section included important inclusive education concepts like equitable access to materials, participation, and instructional practices (Topping and Maloney, 2005). Further, documents referenced the key factor in equitable inclusion, which requires systems to focus on treating individuals differently to ensure they have equal opportunities and the opportunity to maximize their potential (Topping and Maloney, 2005).

Terminology

Four documents explicitly used the term "special needs;" the *Education Act* (2018), the *Students First report* (2018), the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019), and the *Special Education Policy* (2008). The *Students First report* (2018) and the *Special Education Policy* (2008) used "special needs" and "exceptionalities." The term disability was used as a descriptor (i.e., Students with physical or intellectual disabilities), but "special needs" was used as a general term to describe students.

In the literature, inclusion or inclusive education seems to be shifting to the use of the term disability or disabilities to reflect the significance of language and evolving nature of inclusive education (Makoelle, 2020). Although there is a shift, there is no standard practice for vocabulary in inclusive education practices in terms of using "special needs" versus individuals with disabilities (Makoelle, 2020). Nova Scotia's inclusive education documents preferred to use

the term "special needs," which aligned with some inclusive education advocacy literature. Specifically, the use of the term "special needs" aligned with Nidirect's (2015) statement that terms like "special needs" attempts to avoid exclusivity rather than emphasize what an individual can or cannot do.

It is essential to note the role language plays in inclusive education and that there is no clear answer to the language debate. In research by Goering (2015) and Mittler (2000), it seems that disability is the term preferred by inclusive education researchers as there is a shift toward person-first language, but this is not a universal shift as there is no unified agreement on the correct terminology for inclusive education.

Recommendations

Seven documents provided recommendations, directives, or guidelines: the *Raise the Bar report* (Province of Nova Scotia, 2018), the *Students First document* (Commission of Inclusive Education, 2018)*,* the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019)*,* the *BLAC Report on education* (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994), the *Racial Equity Policy* (Province of Nova Scotia, 2002), the *Special Education Policy* (Province of Nova Scotia, 2008), and the *Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender-nonconforming Students* (Province of Nova Scotia, 2014). A significant focus of the recommendations was on recognizing the systematic issues that impact student learning and further attempting to use recommendations to eliminate unwelcoming environments such as institutional norms and social attitudes that discriminate or exclude students (Goering, 2015). In turn, this meant recommendations attempted to examine the structure and environment of the education system to make changes to education systems that include and respect all students. Recommendations with system change understandings aligned with inclusive education literature, specifically Goering's

(2015), view that changes should not be made at the individual student level but at the systematic level. The documents outwardly parallel inclusive education research by Goering (2015), which stated that inclusive education is about fixing environments to work for students rather than inserting students into the education system. Similarly, some documents provided recommendations aligned with the MTSS framework in inclusive education literature, like Bender's (2009), that acknowledged that there might be contextual and instructional issues in schools affecting students' ability and causing challenges in learning.

Although it should be mentioned that recommendations outwardly looked to be aligned with the social model of disability, several recommendations, like the Program Planning Team, duties of educational staff, and principles, demonstrated the medical model of disability. The medical model was demonstrated as the focus of the recommendations was on finding the perceived problem within the child rather than the education system (Crow, 1996).

In terms of recommendations that applied to school psychologists' competencies, five appeared the most frequently across seven documents. The frequently applicable competencies were consultation, collaboration, assessment and evaluation/ psycho-educational assessment, intervention, and research. Although, no documenrs gave any direct recommendations to school psychologists. The absence of information about school psychologists' roles and responsibilities in inclusive is mirrored by Bartolo et al. (2015), who noted that school psychologists are usually not included in inclusive education documents.

Multi-tiered Systems of Support

Two documents explicitly mentioned MTSS; the *Students First document* (Commission of Inclusive Education, 2018) and the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (Province of Nova Scotia, 2019**).** Both shared similar conceptualizations with the current research on MTSS and inclusive education because of the shared focus on student achievement and well-being through effective instruction, assessment, and support for all students (Wexler, 2017).

Similar to Wexler (2017), both documents identified that MTSS was to be used in schools as a prevention-oriented delivery of services that aims to suit all students' needs to promote and provide school-wide reform. Further, the documents highlighted the same importance as Bender (2009) that MTSS is meant to address the academic, social, and behavioural development of students through a continuum of systemwide strategies, resources, structures, and practices that provide a responsive and comprehensive framework to combat barriers for student learning. Moreover, the documents aligned with the literature's understanding that MTSS requires systemwide reform (Eagle et al., 2015) to support students, educational staff, and families in receiving access to inclusive education.

School Psychologists in the Documents

Mirroring the literature that school psychologists are usually not included in inclusive education documents (Bartolo et al., 2015), school psychologists are rarely mentioned throughout the Nova Scotia inclusive education documents. Three documents directly reference school psychologists: the *Students First report* (2018), the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019), and the *Special Education Policy* (2008). The three documents that explicitly reference school psychologists categorized them as either support staff or human resources rather

than outlining their role. The lack of acknowledgement of their roles aligned with Bartolo et al.'s (2015) statement on the lack of indicated roles and responsibilities held by school psychologists in inclusive education documents.

Professionals/Paraprofessionals in the Documents

Seven documents mentioned the roles and responsibilities of other professionals: the *Education Act* (2018), the *Raise the Bar* report (2018), the *Students First report* (2018), the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* (2019), the *Racial Equity policy* (2002), the *Special Education Policy* (2008), and the *Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender non-conforming Students* (2014). Teachers and principals were referenced most frequently in the documents, and eighteen other professionals were mentioned (see Table 3). Similarly, to what Suleymanov (2015) and Thompson (2015) noted in the literature, the documents outlined many roles and responsibilities for teachers and principals. In addition, from the analysis of the documents, it appeared that the roles and responsibilities of professionals and paraprofessionals in Nova Scotia's inclusive education documents were unclear, broad, and not unified across documents. It appeared this way as only one document referenced another inclusive education document. Also, no recommendations were uniform across documents or were recommended in addition to another document's recommendations, principles, or directives. There was also little to no detail in the documents on the collaboration between professionals, the impact collaboration has on roles and responsibilities, and the vital role collaboration between professionals play in inclusive education (Thomson, 2015). The lack of unity makes it seem like roles and responsibilities in inclusive education are segregated and isolated amongst professionals in the education system rather than collaborative and team-driven, as inclusive research suggested by Thomson (2015).

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. The first limitation is that analyzing the documents provides an understanding of the guidelines, directives, and principles, but does not provide an understanding of how these documents are applied in schools or the education system. It is not possible to tell from reading the documents whether the documents reflected the practices at the school or regional centre levels, or they have been implemented by individual schools, educational staff, and other professionals. Another limitation is that there is no information or research to state or identify what Nova Scotia school psychologists are currently doing in schools to promote and facilitate inclusive education.

A third limitation is that many documents highlighted the importance of parent involvement in inclusive education, but this was not captured in this study because it was not one of the categories of analysis. Parent involvement was a prominent part of the Nova Scotia inclusive education documents, and common themes included parental involvement, home-school relationships, and parental advocacy.

A fourth limitation is that there is no information to state what school psychology training programs are teaching or instructing in regards to inclusive education or how they are training school psychologists in inclusive education. In addition to this, this project did not analyze course content on inclusive education offered by school psychology training programs.

A final limitation is that, in contrast to the United States, which has NASP, there are no Canadian guidelines for school psychologists' competencies. It was therefore difficult to determine in the analysis which competencies could be relevant to school psychologists' roles and responsibilities in inclusive education in Nova Scotia and Canada.

Implications for Policy and Practice

There are several implications for policy and practice that arise from this study. Nova Scotia policymakers should consider determining uniform terminology throughout documents. Language is a critical foundation of inclusive education; as inclusive education language evolves, so must the documents' understandings and use of language. Terminology is important for school psychologists and educational staff's roles and responsibilities in inclusive education as it impacts decisions, advocacy, and student achievement and well-being. Therefore, languages' vital role in inclusive education should be included uniformly across inclusive education documents. School psychologists must regularly consider the language they use with students, parents, and educational staff and language's direct connection to advocacy.

Further, the lack of consistency in an inclusive education definition, terminology, and social model or medical model of disability reflects that the documents seem to be developed in isolation from each other. Nova Scotia education policymakers should consider creating linked documents with unity to support inclusive education.

Another implication would be for school psychology training programs to implement courses that provide students with an inclusive education competency. This competency would require programs to address the social and medical models of disability and the model's impact on parent relationships/involvement, student-focused perspectives, and methodology. Moreover, this would require sections focusing on cultural competency and its role in inclusive education and how to provide professional development, leadership, collaboration, and consultation with special education. Finally, the competency would include getting students to analyze documents and their applications to students, educators, and the education system. All these factors are critical pieces in understanding inclusive education. As inclusive education continues to be the

goal of education systems, school psychology programs should prepare students with competency in inclusive education to adequately prepare them for the possible roles and responsibilities they may have in developing, facilitating, and promoting inclusive education in their schools.

From the analysis in this study, it appeared that the most relevant competencies are consultation, collaboration, assessment and evaluation/ psycho-educational assessment, intervention, and research. School psychology training programs may want to consider providing training to students that addresses inclusive education when teaching these competencies. Further, training programs should teach school psychology students how each competency may allow them in practice to advocate, promote, and facilitate inclusive education or inclusive schools.

A final implication would be to include school psychologists in policy creation. Since school psychologists have a unique understanding of how education systems work, they could provide insight on what documents could look like during implementation and provide valuable data that could help shape documents to best support students, parents, and educational staff.

Future Directions

One future direction for research would be to interview Nova Scotia school psychologists regarding their understanding of inclusive education. It would be essential to hear the voices of Nova Scotia school psychologists on several factors such as their definition of inclusive education, their perceived role in inclusive education, and what they do in schools to promote inclusive education. Further, it would be critical to ask Nova Scotia school psychologists about what the education system can do to support their role with inclusive education and what school psychologists think about their future roles and responsibilities as inclusive education evolves.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Nova Scotia inclusive education policy analysis yielded several key findings. The first finding was that there was no universal or standard definition for inclusive education across documents and in Nova Scotia. In addition, no consistent terminology was used to describe students with disabilities but rather focused on the term "special needs" to categorize students with disabilities. Furthermore, documents used the social and medical models of disability in isolation, and some documents combined the models. The analysis of the aforementioned models of disability demonstrated that outwardly, Nova Scotia's inclusive education documents often provided recommendations, guidelines, or principles that aligned with the social model.

In contrast, the policies and related documents (legislation, policies, reports, and acts) had underlying structures such as program planning teams or duties of educational staff that exemplified the medical model. Additionally, the analysis results demonstrated that MTSS and school psychologists were rarely mentioned in the documents. When mentioned, little detail or acknowledgement was paid to their roles in inclusive education, except for MTSS in the *Students First report* (2018). Finally, the findings suggested that there were multiple recommendations across documents that the competencies of school psychologists could support. However, no documents directly provided any roles or responsibilities for school psychologists through recommendations. Overall, school psychologists could have many roles and responsibilities in inclusive education. Nova Scotia has yet to utilize the skills and knowledge provided by school psychologists to help develop and facilitate inclusive education.

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Appendix A

Table 1: Comparison of Competencies

Below is a chart showing the competencies identified by the four Canadian regulatory bodies or psychological organizations: the CPA Accreditation Standard, the Nova Scotia Board of Examiners in Psychology (NSBEP), the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA), and the CPA Section on Educational Psychology.

Competencies:	CPA	NSBEP	MRA	CPA-Educational Psychologist Document
	Assessment	Assessment and Evaluation	Assessment and Evaluation	Psycho-educational Assessments
	Intervention	Intervention	Intervention	Intervention
	Consultation		Consultation	
		Research	Research	Research
	Supervision		Supervision	Supervision
		Ethics and standards	Ethics and standards	
	Program Development and Program Evaluation			
	Teaching			

	Leadership			Leadership
	Interpersonal Skills and Communication	Interpersonal Relationships	Interpersonal Relationships	
				Prevention
				Case, classroom, and system consultation
				Collaboration
				Professional training
	Reflective Practice and Bias Evaluation			

Table 2: Table Containing Factors of Analysis

1. The document's conceptualization/ definition of inclusion.
2. The documents's use of the medical model or the social model (or a combination).

3. How the documents connects to the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act.
   a. The protected group(s) referenced in the documents.
   b. The documents's connection to the protection of the protected group(s).

4. The documents's connection to the goals of the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act   a. The connection between the documents's recommendations and interventions and the directives of the Act.
5. The terminology used to describe the protected group(s): for example: «students with disabilities, » and «students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)».
6. Recommendations from the documents, including interventions.
7. The connection between the recommendations and MTSS.
8. If the documents references school psychologists and if so, in what context(s).
9. Other professionals/ paraprofessionals referenced and how their roles and responsibilities are described.
10. Which of the competencies (MRA, NSBEP, CPA, Educational Psychologist) are relevant to the documents's recommendations.

Table 3: Competencies of School Psychologists Relevant to Recommendations.

Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy	Students First Report	Special Education Policy	Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender non-conforming Students	The *BLAC Report on education*
Consultation (CPA & MRA).	Interpersonal Relationships (CPA &MRA).	Consultation (CPA & MRA).	Consultation (CPA & MRA).	Assessment and evaluation/ Psycho-educational assessment (CPA, MRA, NSBEP, CPA Ed Psy Doc).
Collaboration (CPA Ed Psy Doc).	Consultation (CPA & MRA).	Collaboration (CPA Ed Psy Doc).	Collaboration (CPA Ed Psy Doc).	Intervention (CPA, MRA, NSBEP, CPA Ed Psy Doc).
Assessment and evaluation/ Psycho-educational assessment (CPA, MRA, NSBEP, CPA Ed Psy Doc).	Collaboration (CPA Ed Psy Doc).	Assessment and evaluation/ Psycho-educational assessment (CPA, MRA, NSBEP, CPA Ed Psy Doc).	Teaching (CPA).	Research (MRA, NSBEP, CPA Ed Psy Doc).
Intervention (CPA, MRA, NSBEP, CPA Ed Psy Doc).	Assessment and evaluation/ Psycho-educational assessment (CPA, MRA, NSBEP, CPA Ed Psy Doc).	Intervention (CPA, MRA, NSBEP, CPA Ed Psy Doc).	Case, classroom, and system consultation (CPA Ed Psy Doc).	

Research (MRA, NSBEP, CPA Ed Psy Doc).	Intervention (CPA, MRA, NSBEP, CPA Ed Psy Doc).	Prevention (CPA Ed Psy Doc).		
Prevention (CPA Ed Psy Doc).	Research (MRA, NSBEP, CPA Ed Psy Doc).			
Program Development and Program Evaluation (CPA).	Prevention (CPA Ed Psy Doc).			
Teaching (CPA).	Program Development and Program Evaluation (CPA).			
Leadership (CPA Ed Psy Doc).	Teaching (CPA).			

Table 4: Professionals and paraprofessionals in the Nova Scotia Inclusion Documents

Below is a chart showing the professionals and paraprofessionals listed in the Nova Scotia inclusive education documents. Explicit roles and responsibilities indicates that a document referred to the professional/ paraprofessional and provided them with direct roles and responsibilities in facilitating inclusive education. Implicit roles and responsibilities indicates that a document mentioned the professional or paraprofessional and provided general guidelines or duties to them in general guidelines or duties or in conjunction with other professional or paraprofessionals roles and responsibilities.

	Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy	Students First Report	Raise the Bar Report	Education Act	Racial Equity Policy	Special Education Policy	Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender non-conforming Students
Principal & Vice Principal	Explicit Roles & Responsibilities	Implicit Roles & Responsibilities	Implicit Roles & Responsibilities	Explicit Roles & Responsibilities		Implicit Roles & Responsibilities	

Teaching Support Specialists			Implicit Roles & Responsibilities				
Teachers	Explicit Roles & Responsibilities	Implicit Roles & Responsibilities		Explicit Roles & Responsibilities	Implicit Roles & Responsibilities	Implicit Roles & Responsibilities	Explicit Roles & Responsibilities
Learning Support Teachers	Explicit Roles & Responsibilities						
Teaching Assistants		Implicit Roles & Responsibilities					
Resource Teachers		Implicit Roles &				Implicit Roles &	

		Responsibilities				Responsibilities	
Guidance Counsellors		Implicit Roles & Responsibilities			Implicit Roles & Responsibilities	Implicit Roles & Responsibilities	Implicit Roles & Responsibilities
Behaviour Interventionists		Implicit Roles & Responsibilities					
Support Specialists			Explicit Roles & Responsibilities				
Employees of the Public Education System	Explicit Roles & Responsibilities						Implicit Roles & Responsibilities
Speech Language Pathologists		Implicit Roles &				Implicit Roles &	

		Responsibilities				Responsibilities	
African Nova Scotian Support Staff	Implicit Roles & Responsibilities						
Mi'kmaq Support Staff	Implicit Roles & Responsibilities						
SchoolsPlus		Implicit Roles & Responsibilities					
Student Services						Implicit Roles & Responsibilities	
Itinerant teacher						Implicit Roles &	

				Responsibilities	
Support Staff				Explicit Roles & Responsibilities		
Representative of Agencies Involved					Implicit Roles & Responsibilities	