

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### **1.1. Introduction**

The intent of the introductory section is to give brief highlights on the background of the study, rationale for conducting the research and meanings of key terms that are pillars for this research. It has also subsumed key questions raised and hypotheses which are the roadmaps for the realization of the objectives. Lastly, the section has explained the added values and delimitations of the study.

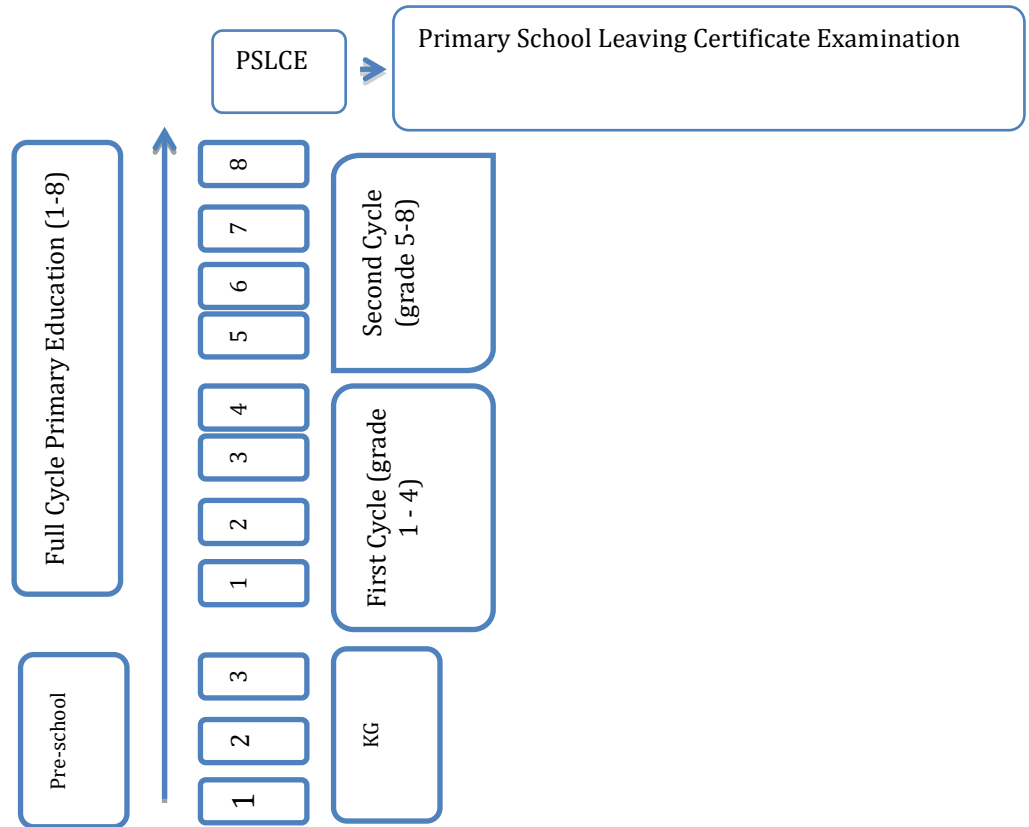
### **1.2. Ethiopian Primary Education in Brief**

Education being an enabling factor for the achievement of any development goal and basic human rights (OAU, 1990; UN, 1989), special attention has been given to it in the Post-2015 Development Goals (Sustainable Development Goals(SDG): 2030 Agenda). The bases for the SDG was laid in 2015 with the active participation of Governments, companies and civil society where 193 countries of the United Nations adopted the Agenda. The Goal has 17 goals that the world agreed on them. The Education sector has been addressed under Goal 4. More practically, it is addressed in Goal 4 as, “Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning” (UN, 2015, p.14/35). This is because it prepares people with the knowledge and skills they need for improved and more dignified lives. Education is the key for the fulfilment of other sustainable development goals as well. Thus, by 2030, it targeted provision of free, relevant, equitable and quality education, eliminate gender disparities in education and substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, etc. (UN, 2015).

In line with these, the government of Ethiopia is boiling down the general Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets to its context in each Ministry. The education sector as one of the Ministries has set its own goal in line with the SDGs. It has planned to ensure quality and accessibility of the education, target of net primary school (1-8) enrolment of 100%, increase in completion rate (grade 1-8) to 74% and reduce grade 1 drop –out rate to 5% (FDRE, 2016).

The primary education system of Ethiopia has a structure of Preschool Education and Primary Education. A full cycle of primary school accommodates from grade one to

eight. At grade eight, students are expected to sit for Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination (PSLCE) prepared by the respective States. The path of the primary education system has been displayed structurally in Figure 1.1



**Figure 1.1. Hierarchy of the FDRE Primary Education System (FMoE, 2016)**

Primary education is the beginning of formal education (Ramani, 2013) that helps in removing mass literacy. He has further explained that primary education is the foundation where the child’s holistic development laid down. Hence, the education offices are trying to avail basic education to prepare students for further schooling (FMoE, 1994). For these, the Ethiopian education is designed with the fundamental objectives of:

- Develop the physical, mental and problem-solving capacity of individuals;
- Bring up citizens who can take care of and utilize resources wisely;
- Bring up citizens who respect human rights, stand for the well-being of people, as well as for equality, justice and peace, endowed with democratic culture and discipline;

- Bring up citizens who differentiate harmful practices from useful ones, who seek and stand for truth, appreciate aesthetics and show positive attitude towards the development and dissemination of science and technology in society;
- Cultivate the cognitive, creative, productive and appreciative potential of citizens by appropriately relating education to environment and societal needs (FMoE, 1994, pp.7-8).

In Ethiopia, PSLCE is given on the concluding point of primary education (grade eight) to certify completion of primary education and the minimum passing mark as indicated in the policy is 50% (FMoE, 1994). For this, principals of primary schools as intermediate level administrators are trying their best in mobilizing the school community so that they will have the highest rate of promotion at grade eight, which is actually a tough job for principals and teachers that demand them to work hand in hand.

In line with the strategies and objectives of the education system, Ethiopia has made tremendous efforts and progresses in the education sector in the last 20 years as per its objectives especially on access to primary education. It has reached a net enrolment of 94.3% (90.9% females) with the Gender Parity Index (GPI) of 0.92 in 2014/15 academic year which was delivered in 33,373 schools (FMoE, 2016). The Annual Statistical Abstract has also indicated the repetition rate which has dropped slightly from 8.4% (8.1% females) in 2013/14 to 7.3% (7.0 % females) in 2014/15. On the other hand, the drop- out rate has increased from 9.0 % (8.0% females) in 2013/14 to 9.9 % (10.0% females) in 2014/15. Furthermore, the Abstract indicated that the primary education (1-8) student-teacher ratio was 46 and the students-section ratio was 54. Regarding the physical dimensions of schools, more specifically about facilities, it was 88.1% of the schools that were having toilets, 23.7% with electricity, 30.4% library and 40.6% have a pedagogical resource centre.

In the education system (FMoE, 2016), the completion of grade 4 or first cycle primary school is considered as a pre-requisite for a sustainable level of literacy and continue on grade 5. However, the completion rate of grade five and eight is not satisfactory which was 61.0% (60.0% females) for grade 5 and 51.3 % (50.9% females) for grade eight in 2014/15 academic year. The rural-urban comparison of students' population was reported as 80.4% in rural and 19.6% in urban.

In all these achievements, the leadership of the schools that heavily relies on the principals is deep-seated since the principals are frontrunners in improving school

outcomes (OECD, 2009). For this, Smith et al. (2014) have summarized, “in today’s high-stakes education world, principals are primarily held accountable for student achievement outcomes” (p. iii).

In order to strengthen the efforts observed so far and ensure continuity of the results, FMoE has prepared the 5<sup>th</sup> Education Sector Development Program (ESDP V) of 2015/16 to 2019/20. The program gave due attention to the improvement of quality of outcomes, reducing high dropout and repetition rates, fulfilling educational inputs including trained teachers, inputs of appropriate school materials, etc. (FMoE, 2015a). Moreover, it has given due attention to the school climate, leadership and management with refreshed weight on instructional leadership to improve principals’ support to the instructional process. Thus, the priorities of the ESDP V are to promote effective leadership, management and governance through cluster supervisors’, working on the development of teachers and leaders with the mission of “turning teaching into a profession of choice” (FMoE, 2015a, 55). Besides to these, in creating a healthy and attractive school environment, it has planned to improve the school climate.

According to FMoE (2013), eminence of the education scheme greatly rests on the presence of competent and committed school principals besides to other factors, being the source of intellectual stimulation for the school community. This responsibility is planned to be monitored, geared and ensured by standards and letting principals pass through the assessment process to meet the set standards. This was done with the presupposition that it is problematic to advance and keep on the quality of education without having the set of clear standards and continuous assessment (FMoE, 2013). The standard has indicators and domains for knowledge, skills and attitudes that all principals are expected to demonstrate their fitness for the leadership.

The names principal, head, head teacher, school manager, headmaster or director are used interchangeably in schools at different times and places (Raynor, 2004). However, this research will use ‘principal’ as it is put in the National Professional Standard for School Principals (FMoE, 2013). It is designed to include pre-primary, primary and secondary school principals as a whole. Thus, the name principal is used for both levels of the targeted schools of this research.

Leading schools today has become indispensable and multifaceted job requiring high standards of proficient practices and competencies to perform it well as leadership is the core agent of change in schools and process of creating a world where people want to belong (FMoE, 2015a; Sharma, 2009; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Dilts, 1996).

Educators have asserted that the most important task of the leader is managing in diversity in which the “emphasis in organizations that are highly diverse must be on creating a climate where people with a dissimilar sense of identity can work together in a way that makes diversity an asset” (El-Ahraf & Gray, 2000, p. 10). This is possible if the school has good leadership, which heavily relies on the principal. For this purpose, the education sector should be serious in assigning or delegating principals for schools. However, this is still a worry for many scholars in the Ethiopian context.

The current practices of assigning principals have become a concern and pressing issue for many educators, Parent, Student and Teacher Associations (PSTAs) and other concerned education partners (Mitchell, 2015; Goddard et al., 2001). It is because of agony on the principals’ competence on leadership and pedagogical reasons, morale and lack of adequate preparation and training. This will also affect trust between principals, teachers, parents and students that are essential for school improvement (Frank, 2010), otherwise trust and communication shuts down that leads to distrust, resentment, conflict, betrayal and revenge that have the potential to threaten the well-functioning of the school.

As it is vividly articulated in OECD (2009), “Standards of teaching and learning need to improve and improve continuously if schools are to ensure that children and young people can be successful in the future” (p.12). For this, the principal is expected to perform the main character in bringing motivation, boosting staff capacity and ushering a healthy climate where teachers work and learn auspiciously. This is because teachers are the one who steers the boat; they are like the prophet of the true God; the usher in the true kingdom of God; a reservoir of new spirit and remover of spiritual blindness (John Dewey & Radhakrishnan cited in Aggarwal, 2013; Sidhu, 2015). This will lead the school community to experience and develop a better wisdom of trust and healthy school climate.

FMoE and UNICEF (2012) have underlined and expressed their concern on the importance of keeping trusty and healthy climate for the effective functioning of teachers as teachers’ quality is crucial in determining the destiny of students. This demanded the education sector to prepare professional standards for teachers and principals.

OECD (2009) recommended that principals can play the instructional leadership in a healthy and trustworthy manner by monitoring and evaluating teachers’ performance, designing teachers’ professional development programs, coordinating

teamwork and collaborative learning. Consequently, teachers will enjoy the teaching learning process to deliver quality education to their students having a healthy and trustworthy school environment.

### **1.3. School Climate, School Community Trust and Academic Achievement**

#### **1.3.1. Definition of School Climate**

Several researchers and scholars have tried to approach and define what school climate mean for them. However, their definitions slightly vary based on their philosophical and etymological underpinning, however, the basic idea trolls around the common flagpole of, ‘personality of a school’. The school climate is the overall cumulative result of the values and norms of the school, goals and visions enshrined. It develops from the experience of school life. The personality of the school gets into the students’ psychological makeup through communications with teachers, peers, playground and class room experiences, principal/ teacher-parent interactions, etc.

Climate is a multifaceted concept where defining it is becoming an exciting professional work and a hot topic for researchers as well (Vasquez, 2011). In a normal and literal context, climate is more familiar in the sense of weather or atmosphere. Whenever the weather changes to warm or normal temperature, most of the people feel good and usually comfortable having a normal dressing. If the weather gets very cold, hot, cloudy, rainy, chilly or sunny, they need to regulate and use mechanisms that can help them adjust or adapt to the existing climate like a change in dressing, staying in rooms, use of air conditioning, umbrella, bathing, etc. Similarly, school climate influences how the school community senses and feels, readiness to get involved, excitement to help others and their sense of self, trying to control the climate, avoiding or adapting oneself to the existing climate.

Like personality of an individual, climate is for the organization (Forsyth et al., 2011; Blum, 2007). Hence, school climate is **a psychological threshold on how the school community perceives it**. According to Doctor (1997), “a positive school climate exists when the school community feels comfortable, wanted, valued, accepted, and secured in an environment where they can interact with caring people they trust” (p.3.3), and for NSCC (2007), a school climate is defined as the “quality and character of school life” (p.4). Here, climate bases itself on the configurations of students', parents' teachers' and principals' experience of school life. It reflects the norms, goals, values,

interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices and organizational structures in the school.

A healthy climate in schools is the result of collaborative effort of the school community where everyone is expected to contribute its share positively. It depends on physically welcoming nature of schools, its conduciveness to teaching–learning as an environment with smooth interaction, promoting a sense of belongingness affectively, sense of self-respect and an atmosphere that indorses academic excellence for self-fulfilment (Marshall, 2004; Gonder & Hymes, 1994). For Doctor (1997), a healthy climate is a school setting having the features of being safe, welcoming, compassionate, loyal, nurturing, empowering, and reciprocally respectful. Hence, a healthy climate is the one which is positive, sensitive, and caring for the school community in “providing the contextual supports essential to the development of a healthy self-concept among students” (Haynes & Comer, 1990, p.275).

According to Loukas (2007), a school climate is “the feelings and attitudes that are elicited by a school’s environment” (p.1). It is simply what makes the school ‘a school’. These feelings and attitudes are the predominant and persistent ideals, guidelines, norms, affairs, and procedures in a school that service in defining the features of the school. It can also be viewed as predominant and persistent values, policies, norms, relationships, and policies of the school that can help in qualifying its character. This tells you merely what makes the school feel like a school.

### **1.3.2. Definition of School Community Trust**

A school community functions as a group sharing common values about the education of children with its constituents of students, parents, teachers, principals and other support staff (Redding, 1991). The school community in this study is confined to faculty (principals and teachers) and clients (parents and students) (Forsyth et al., 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Thus, it encompasses a reciprocal trust among school community members. It is “at the collective level” (Forsyth et al., 2011, p.4) as it addresses the workgroup in which they have expectancy and reliance on the words, promises and actions of members. This has been more aggrandized in Blanchard & Broadwell (2018) which disclosed how trust is important for school community to act as a team. This has been narrated as

True leadership comes to life when mutual trust exists between leaders

and followers. They are honest with each other. They hold each other accountable. This unique esprit de corps is the special sauce that really separates great teams from good teams (p.126).

Many researchers and educators (Brown, 2014; Robbins et al., 2009; Savolainen, 2008; Forsyth et al., 2007; Covey, 2006) and others have come with different phrases in defining trust which is a key term in school community trust. They viewed trust as safety, comfort and feeling that someone has on your back, an environment where individuals can be their best selves, teachers talking to their co-workers, confer on how to improve and learn from what is working, embed in relationships, multifaceted construct, a lubricant for cooperative activity, free information and knowledge sharing, precondition for innovation, etc. Likewise, "Trust is a subjective condition that allows an entity (a person) to take a consequential action as a result of accepting some (subjective) level of uncertainty" (Todd, 2007, p.11). For all these, the principal is the key team player in building trust at a school level.

Covey (2006) has addressed the psychological, sociological, economic and educational impacts of trust in his marvellous work of 'The Speed of Trust'. He explained as the foundation for relationship, the one thing that changes everything, the key factor in global economy, etc. Covey (2006) has summarized the importance of trust in our day to day life as "if removed, will destroy the most powerful government, the most successful business, the most thriving economy, the most influential leadership, the greatest friendship, the strongest character, the deepest love" (p.1).

According to Robbins et al. (2009), trust is "a positive expectation that others will not act either through words, actions, or decisions opportunistically" (p.464). On the other hand, Brown (2014) viewed trust as comfort, safety, and feeling that somebody is on your back and there exists an environment where individuals can be their best selves. For Mineo (2014), "trust is the glue that binds the leader to her/his followers and provides the capacity for organizational and leadership success" (p.1).

Trust is a psychological threshold within an individual of being keen to involve in supportive behaviour having some sort of risk and insecurity. Likewise, "trust is a person's willingness to accept and/or increase their vulnerability by relying on the implicit or explicit information." (Todd, 2007, p.9). For Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2003), it "involves taking a risk and making oneself vulnerable to another with the confidence that the other will act in ways that aren't detrimental to the trusting party" (p.183).



The Cambridge Encyclopaedia (1990) viewed trust as an “arrangement that a person (the trustee) holds property for the benefit of another (the beneficiary)”. The trustee in violation of trust is liable for the damage experienced. Oxford English Dictionary (1989) has also defined trust as the “quality of being trustworthy, fidelity, reliability, loyalty and trustiness”. The New Oxford Thesaurus of English Dictionary (2000) described trust as “a relationship built on mutual trust and respect, confidence, belief, faith, freedom from suspicion/doubt, sureness, certainty, certitude, assurance, conviction, credence, and reliance”. It is viewed as the opposite of distrust, mistrust, or scepticism. Overall, it is viewed as a relationship or confidence in someone or something as a result of the qualities observed in it or her/ him.

Trust is perceived by different fields and experts in different ways based on their philosophical underpinnings. For example, psychologists perceive trust as “a belief or feeling, deeply rooted in an individual’s personality and shaped by early life experiences” (Diamond Management Consulting, n. d. p.2) For this, the developmental stages of Erikson start with basic first stage of human development as trust versus mistrust (Dandapani, 2010; Papalia et al., 2004; Baron, 2001) where the child starts to develop a sense of trust. On a similar way, Louis (2007) has put his understandings of trust as “the confidence in or reliance on the integrity, veracity, justice, friendship, or other sound principle, of another person or group” (p.2).

The definition of Awad and Ghaziri (2010) gave more emphasis on character and competence. Thus, they defined it as “an attitude or confidence in another person- his character or competencies” (p.59).

The researcher has considered the definition of Tschannen-Moran (2014) as a spring board for this study which she has defined trust as “one’s willingness to be vulnerable to another based on the confidence that the other is benevolent, honest, open, reliable, and competent” (pp.19-20).

### **1.3.3. Interdependence of School Climate and Trust**

Trust and school climate are sometimes overlapping terms where one can affect the other and one may be the cause as well, mutually inclusive. According to Mant (1999), when the relationship or climate of the organization is healthy, its network of relationships within and out of the organization creates a climate of trust. This trust in turn acts as a kind of antibody against environmental turbulence. In this way, trust and climate can be considered as symbiotic since there cannot be healthy climate in the

absence of trust among the community and there cannot be trust in an unhealthy climate. Thus, one buttresses the other and “open school climate and an atmosphere of trust go together” (Forsyth et al., 2011, p.8).

School improvement, more specifically the success of students is the cumulative outcome of the school management, parents, environment, students and teachers. In most of the research findings of (Brewster & Railsback, 2003), “the quality of the relationships within a school community makes a difference” (p.2) especially in students’ performance leading to experience greater academic success.

There is a strong belief that relationships matter for students where achievement and trust are at the heart of strong relationship (Goddard et al., 2001) that helps students learn freely and easily in their schools. The school is the miniature society, an epitome of life outside, lengthened arm of the family, guardian of academic freedom, living examples of freedom of inquiry, experimentation, and democracy (Dewey, cited on Aggarwal, 2013). With these, there shall be a healthy school climate and strong trust especially between teachers, students, parents and the leadership, if not it will affect the overall teaching- learning process and schools will not enjoy the expected participation of stakeholders and success in their plans.

There is a need to establish non- toxic school environment and a trustworthy relationship among school community members to each other which led to the main concepts of the paper, ‘school climate, school community trust and impacts on academic achievement’.

#### **1.3.4. Academic Achievement**

Though there are several result indicators that might be used to gauge the performance of schools, students’ academic achievement is one of the virtually agreed indicator used to measure school effectiveness (Forsyth et al., 2011). For this, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, its hierarchical organs and partners are struggling with reforms to improve the academic performance and achievement of students, be it at lower, middle or higher levels. Academic achievement is usually considered as a measurement tool for the knowledge gained in formal education. It is based on the achievement versus the reference set by the schools (norm or criterion) that determines the pass rate. It is assessed by exams, tests, quizzes, projects, assignments, etc. which are again expressed in terms of marks, percentages, grades, excellent, very good, good, poor, failed, etc. Here, the achievement level of the students is judged by the marks they

scored in examinations.

School assessment tracks the performance of schools in the achievement of stated goals, mostly the performance of students in terms of promotion rate, repetition, dropout rate and marks on an average which are key indicators of school achievement. The information generated from the assessment process is used to establish baseline data for the next planning, track trends, and make comparisons (Hoffman & Summers, 2000). Harris and Muijs (2005) clarified that teachers' effectiveness has been a matter of some debate, and a teacher is effective if students' test scores rise.

Achievement is one of the basic elements in defining the healthy school climate under the academic dimension. The academic achievement is the result of the instructional process. It is the degree where by students, teachers and institutions have achieved their common educational goal.

School climate is a key component in the debates about enhancing academic excellence and school reform (Tableman, 2004). Likewise, a healthy climate is an academic environment that stimulates learning, give importance to academics, achievements and performance and give a reward and praise as well. On the other hand, a relationship among the school community members has a more effect on the value and features of the school and the accomplishment of students than any other factor (Barth, 2001 in Redburn, 2009). The relationship leads again to trust which will have an impact on the performance of students thereby determining their achievements.

Tableman (2004) viewed a caring school climate as a key for, "higher grades, engagement, attendance, expectations and aspirations, a sense of scholastic competence, fewer school suspensions, and on-time progression through grades, higher self-esteem and self-concept, less anxiety, less depression and no loneliness and less substance abuse" (p.5).

Researchers are worried about the effects of climate and trust on schools' performance. Thus, rigorous researches have been done and going on even today. This research can be considered as one of the addenda where the findings can give the current context of Ethiopian school climate and trust. Similarly, the recommendations can give directions for further actions.

## **1.4. Contexts of the Research Areas**

Ethiopia is a non-coastal country in the eastern horn of Africa. Presently, its governance is structured with 9 ethnic-based States and two City Administrations. It has a projected population of 94 ML (49.8% females) for 2017 (CSA, 2013). The target regions of the study, the Amhara National Regional State (ANRS) and the Southern Nations and Nationalities People Regional State (SNNPRS) accommodate 43% of the total population. The study has again considered South Gonder Zone of the ANRS and Gurage Zone of SNNPRS for this study.

### **1.4.1. South Gonder Zone**

South Gondar is one of the Zones in the ANRS where its seat of administration is Debre Tabor that is 108 Km northwest of Bahir Dar, the capital of the Region and 660 Km from Addis Ababa, the capital of the country. The Zone has a total of 2, 484,929 (49.4% females) population which was projected for 2016/17(CSA, 2013) within an area coverage of 14,095.19 square kilometres. South Gonder Zone encompasses 10 districts and 1 city administration under its governance.

South Gonder Zone has an altitude range of 1500 - 3,600 mean above sea level with an average yearly rainfall ranging from 700-mm -1300 mm and the average daily temperature is 17°C. The study has considered Fogera and Libo Kemkem districts. Districts are the third-level administrative structures linking local administrations with the zone.

#### **1.4.1.1. Fogera District**

Fogera district is found in South Gonder Zone, 55 Km to the North of Bahir Dar of the ANRS and 607 from Addis Ababa (capital of the country). The district has 32 local administrations with in area coverage of 1,028.21 square kilometres. The projected population of the district for 2016/17 was 253, 790(49.17% females) (CSA, 2013). The district is demarked by Libo Kemkem in its North, Farta in the East, Dera in the South and Lake Tana in the West. The district has topography of plain (76%), mountainous/hilly (13%) and gorge (11%) with a temperature of maximum 27.2°C and Minimum 10.3°C. Rice is the main harvest/plantation covering 19,333 hectares with 32 % of the district's production followed by Maize covering 20% (Fogera District, Finance and Economy Development Office, 2016).

### **1.4.1.2. Libo Kemkem District**

Libo Kemkem is another district of South Gonder Zone, which is 67 km from Bahir Dar. The district has 32 local administrations covering a total area of 951.49 square km. Libo Kemkem district is bounded by districts like Belesa in the North, Fogera in the South, Ebenat in the East and Lake Tana and Gonder Zuria district in the West. The temperature of the district is 27.9 °C maximum and 11.1 °C minimum. Topographically, 21% is mountainous, 42% plain, 30% hilly and 6% covered with water and 1 % is gorge. Based on the projection of the CSA (2013) for 2016, the population of the district was 223, 526 (96.53% living in a rural area being engaged in agriculture).

### **1.4.2. Gurage Zone**

Gurage Zone is one of the zones of the SNNPRS. The Zone is given its name from the name of the ethnic group (majority) who are living in the zone. The administrative centre of the Zone is Walkete that is located at 155 km from Addis Ababa towards southwest direction. The agro-ecology of the zone, out of the total land size 7% kola (warm to hot, 20°C to 30°C), 65 % Weinadega (cool to warm, 16°C and 20°C) and 28 % Dega (cool to cold, 10°C and 16°C).

The Zone has a total projected population of 1,535,386 (48.5% females) in 2016 (Gurage Zone, Finance and Economy Development, 2016). According to the report, the Zone has a total area coverage of 5,932 square kilometres with an average temperature of 18°C. The Zone has 13 districts and 2 city administrations.

At zonal level, the class students-ratio was 1:55 for grade 1-8 and teacher-student ratio was 1:47 which were above the standard set by the country as 1:50 and 1:40 respectively (Gurage Zone, Finance and Economy Development, 2016).

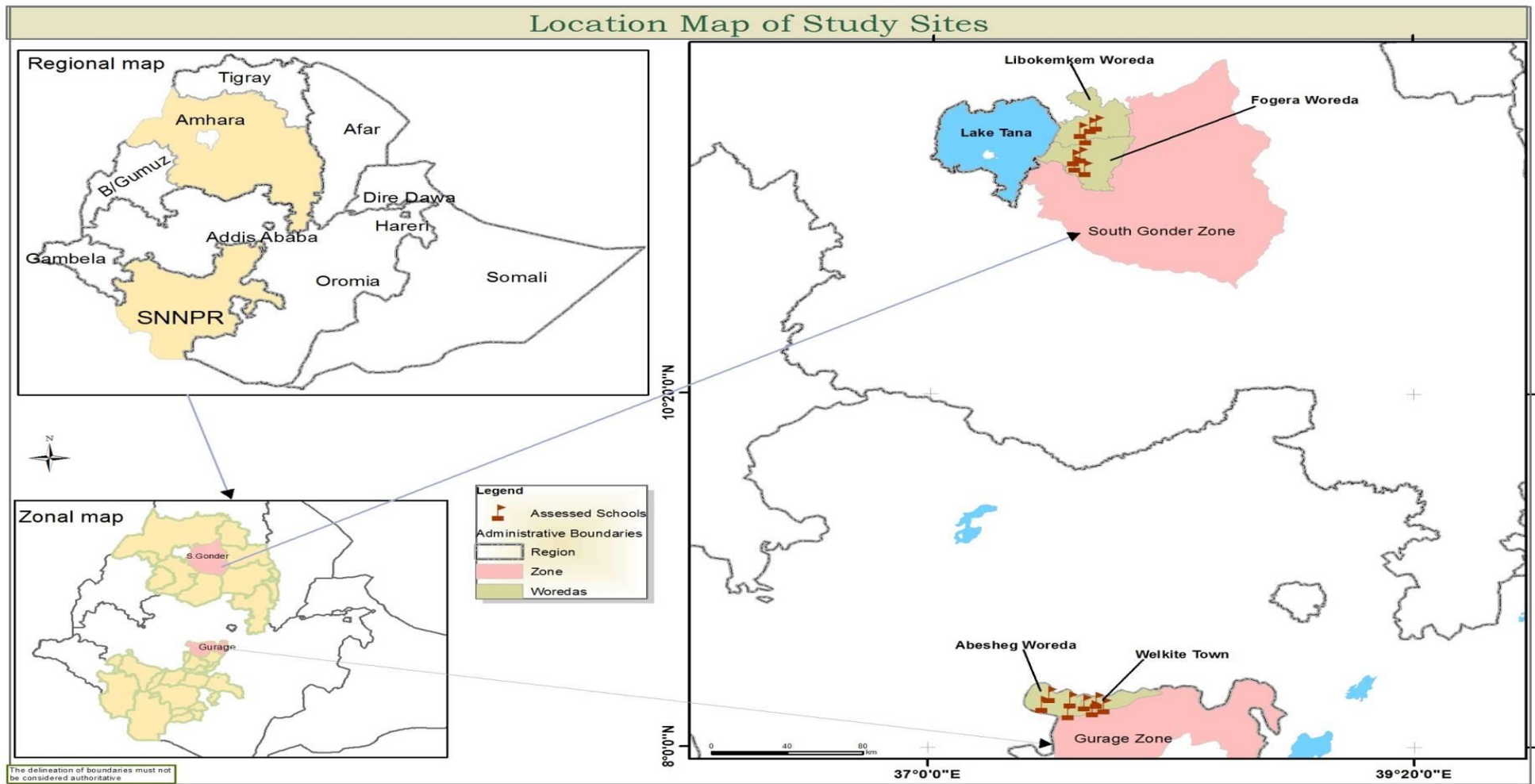
#### **1.4.2.1. Abeshege District**

Abeshege is one of the districts of the Gurage Zone having 29 local administrations. The district has a total population of 72,917 (47.1% females) with in area coverage of 604.2 square kilometre (Gurage Zone, Finance and Economy Development, 2016). Kebena and Cheha districts of Gurage Zone in the west bound the district and the rest is surrounded by Oromia Regional State. The annual average temperature of the district ranges from 18.0 and 28.3 °C, while the total annual rainfall

varies between 801mm and 1400 mm with in the topography of from 1000-2000 mean above sea level.

#### **1.4.2.2. Walkete City Administration**

Walkete is both the seat of the Administrative Zone and City Administration. The projected population of the city administration for 2016 was 38,241(49.8% females) having total area coverage of 11.3 Sq.km (Gurage Zone, Finance and Economy Development, 2016). The city administration has 6 local administrations (3 urbans and 3 rural) surrounded by Kebena district of the zone. This town has an elevation between 1910 and 1935 meters above sea level with an average temperature of 28.3 °C.



**Map 1. 1. Location of Study Regions, Zones and Districts**

## 1.5. Rationale

This research has focused and selected Ethiopia, as it is the home of the researcher where he knows the education system, culture and language of the country. In Ethiopia, there are studies on leadership style, gender and effectiveness in Ethiopia (Dejenie, 2011), enhancing leadership capacity of principals and the school improvement and effectiveness (Mitchell, 2015), the practices and barriers in leadership (Roul, 2012), trust between principals and teachers in preparatory schools (Obang, 2014), school leadership effectiveness on students' academic achievement (Teshale, 2015), leadership styles towards students' academic performance (Endale et al., 2015), enhancing school leadership (Abebe et al., 2015), teachers' job satisfaction (Gedefaw, 2012), etc. However, a study has not been found that assessed or examined the school climate, school community trust and their impact on the academic achievement of primary school students in Ethiopia.

Primary schools being the foundation for all educational careers (Ramani, 2013), there has not been found a study that assessed the school climate and school community trust that may exist between primary school teachers, students, parents and principals. Thus, the researcher is motivated by this hollowness of information and courageously started to intervene on this gap auspiciously. It is also more important to know the existing school climate and the level of trust that prevails in school community and their impact on the academic achievement of students.

School climate and trust being key factors in the improvement of schools, students' achievement, school attendance, school discipline, good governance in school and in general quality of education, no serious attention has been given to it. This void of information can gear attention for researchers, as it is one of the priorities to know the present scenario of school climate and level of trust between school community that may have either positive or adverse effect on students' academic performance.

Henceforth, the investigator is interrogating a question on the ascribed school climate and trust of the school community (teachers, principals, students, and parents). This can be examined through assessment tools that can address each dimension of school climate and trust (Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Robbins et al., 2009). These school climate facets (community engagement, academic press, collegial leadership and teachers' professionalism) and trust facets (benevolence, reliability/consistency, competency, honesty, and openness) are going to be again more



specific with sub-indicator statements. The trust of each party and the healthiness of school climate are going to be assessed against the academic achievement of students.

## **1.6. Title of the Study**

The area of the research is about school leadership in Ethiopia focusing on school climate, school community trust and their relationship with academic achievement of primary school students. Consequently, the topic has come to be school climate and trust: status and impact on the academic achievement of primary school students in Ethiopia.

## **1.7. Objectives**

The general intent of this research was to examine the school climate, school community' level of trust and their impact on the academic achievement of primary school students in Ethiopia. It looked school climate, teachers', students', parents' and principals' level of trust towards each other in relation to some select variables (experience, location and gender) and their implication on students' academic achievement. This general objective subsumed the following specific objectives:

1. To study the existing climate of schools,
2. To study the school community's level of trust in relation to gender, location and experience, and
3. To examine the impact of school climate and school community trust on the academic achievement of primary school students.

## **1.8. Research Questions and Hypothesis**

In comprehending the stated objectives of the study, the researcher looked answers for the following key research questions and hypothesis based on the nature of the objectives set.

**Objective 1:** To study the existing climate of schools

- 1.1. Do schools follow **collegial leadership** to have healthy school climate?
- 1.2. Is there **teachers' professionalism** in schools?
- 1.3. Is there any **academic press** in schools?
- 1.4. Is there any **community engagement / participation** in schools?
- 1.5. Are there any significant differences in the perception of school climate in relation to **gender, location** and **experience** of teachers and principals?

**Objective 2:** To study school community trust in relation to gender, location and experience.

2.1. Is the school community benevolent?

2.2. Is there any **integrity** between school community? Do teachers, principals, parents and students **keep their promises**?

2.3. Is the school community open **and upfront** with each other?

2.4. Is the school community **reliable and predictable** to each other?

2.5. Is the school community competent enough for their jobs?

2.6. Are there any significant differences in the levels of trust in relation to **gender, location and experience** of teachers and principals?

**Objective 3:** To examine the impact of school climate and school community trust on the academic achievement of primary school students.

### **Hypotheses**

H<sub>0</sub> 1: There is no significant relationship between school climate and school community trust.

H<sub>0</sub> 2: There is no significant relationship between school climate and academic achievement of primary school students.

H<sub>0</sub> 3: There is no significant relationship between school community trust and academic achievement of primary school students.

## **1.9. Significance of the Study**

The outcomes of this research can give an insight for policy developers and decision makers on the current status of the Ethiopian school climate and trust among teachers, principals, students and parents. This will put them in a momentum to think of how they should strengthen, improve or maintain a healthy and trustworthy school environment for the maximum benefit of students. It is also envisaged to make a theoretical contribution to the academia associated with school climate, trust and their impact on the students' academic achievement.

The researcher feels that it is void about having a picture on school community level of trust and status of school climate in the current context of Ethiopia. Hence, this paper may give a more understanding for educational leaders, policy makers, cluster supervisors, researchers and others who want to have some mental picture about the school climate, trust and academic achievement and be curious in assigning principals.

Beyond this, the research will serve as a stepping-stone for those researchers who want to pursue further researches, examinations and interventions in the areas.

## **1.10. Operational Definitions**

### **A. Independent Variables**

#### **1. School Climate**

**School Climate** is the feeling and perceptions of teachers and principals towards the school environment. It is expressed in:

- i. **Collegial Leadership:** a leadership style where principals practice openness while they are leading the school community.
- ii. **Teachers' Professionalism:** the quality of teachers being abided by the ethics of teaching-learning and practices, professional judgment or decisions and their competency.
- iii. **Academic Press:** the academic freedom and collaboration exercised by principals, teachers and students in the school.
- iv. **Community Engagement:** participation and involvement of the nearby community on school- related issues.

#### **2. Trust**

**Trust** is the relationship, interdependence, confidence and reliance that can exist between teachers, principals, students and parents in the target schools. It is the degree to which principals and teachers perceive each other and being willing to take risks with the assumptions that others will not act opportunistically, work together as a team. It can be expressed as very high, high, medium, low or no trust.

#### **3. School Community Trust**

**School Community Trust** is the confidence that teachers, principals, students and parents hold as caring for each other (**benevolence**), being predictable in their behaviour (**reliability**), capable in their tasks and duties (**competence**), being authentic (**honesty**) and open for discussion and sharing of information(**openness**).

### **B. Dependent Variable**

**Academic Achievement:** examination results of students in completing grade four and eight. It is the annual average marks of students which were considered as an index of academic achievement.

### C. Related Key Terms

**Experience:** is the service year of principals and teachers starting from their date of employment.

**Gender:** refers to being male or female in the Ethiopian context, which is cisgender. In Ethiopia, it is uncommon to have third gender or transgender.

**Location:** it is the site or area where the target schools are found being in rural or urban.

**Full Cycle Primary School:** this is the first stage of the entire superstructure of schooling going from grade one to eight. In the category of primary schools, there are schools that go from grade 1 to 4, grade 1 to 5, grade 1 to 6 or grade 1 to 7 based on their capacity and resources. These are not the target schools for this research since these are not full cycle primary schools.

**Principals:** are educational leaders who are leading the schools representing the leadership of the school.

**School Community:** in this study, it includes those students, teachers, parents and principals who have the high stake in the teaching- learning process.

**Cluster Supervisors:** are teachers who are assigned to supervise schools that are under one cluster. In Ethiopia, government schools are clustered based on their geographical proximity for addressing problems collectively, capacity building, experience and resource sharing. For this purpose, a teacher who is assigned to coordinate and supervise cluster member schools is the cluster supervisor.

**Impact:** is the possible influence that the levels of school community trust and school climate have brought on the academic achievement or marks of students.

**District:** is the fourth level of the administrative structure in Ethiopia as Federal=>Region/State => Zone => District => Local Administration.

### 1.11. Delimitations

The study is delimited to

- Two regional States of the country: ANRS & SNNPRS,
- Government full cycle primary schools,
- Grade four and eight completing students and their academic result and,
- The students' academic achievement of 2015/16 (2008 E. C.) academic year.

## 1.12. Organization of the Thesis

The thesis is basically framed into six chapters as follows.

**Chapter One:** This is the introductory part of the paper that started with a brief introduction of the Ethiopian education system especially how the primary school structure looks like and the current scenario of the statistical reports. It was succeeded proceeded by the key terms and their meanings. This was breathed to the dimensions of school climate, trust and related variables like gender, experience and location. These were substantiated with contexts of the research area and rationales for conducting the study. The introductory section has also included the objectives of the study, research questions, hypothesis, and significance of the study, the title of the study and delimitations of the study.

**Chapter Two:** This part has explained the conceptual understanding and nature of school climate and trust as research areas. Moreover, the chapter hosted the features of school climate and trust, how to build a positive climate and trustworthy relationships and how to restore if the health of school climate and trust is affected. Finally, the chapter adjourned its journey with a conceptual framework that served a guide for the researcher in the remaining sections of the paper.

**Chapter Three:** This is a review of related literature as it assessed and synthesized similar studies done across the world and extracted them from articles, journals, books, reports and others. Thus, this chapter has encapsulated topics both on school climate and trust addressing studies done in Ethiopia, other African countries, abroad Africa and trend analysis on the research area.

**Chapter Four:** This chapter was fully devoted to the procedures and designs of the research. Thus, it included issues like logical reasoning in the study, research paradigm and philosophical underpinnings, the type of research the study has followed and sources of data focusing on the population, sampling and samples. It has also exhausted the types of tools the researcher has used for both school climate and school community trust. Furthermore, it has included a diagrammatic representation of the overall research, ethical principles, scoring procedures, data analysis techniques, its presentation and finally the limitations of this research.

**Chapter Five:** This is the subdivision of the paper which totally devoted to the results of the study. Thus, it has included the demographic variables related to respondents and the pertinent findings of the research. The findings have also included the comparisons of the perception of principals, teachers, students and parents on school

climate and trust across regions, district, location, gender, school, age, experience and qualification of the respondents. Furthermore, it has included the result of the association between school climate, trust and their dimensions within themselves and with students' academic performance. Lastly, the chapter has entertained the predicting or determining the power of these variables to students' academic performance.

**Chapter Six:** This chapter is the summary, conclusion and suggestion part of the paper. In this section, the crams of the research findings are presented thematically. Following this, the researcher has concluded its journey by forwarding crucial observations from the theoretical dimensions and practical observations deduced from field works. Finally, in the suggestion frame, the researcher pinpointed some gloomy areas that need further investigation.