

Conflict Analysis in Anglican Boarding Schools: A Thematic Analysis of Governance, Accountability and Authority Relations

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ABSTRACT

This article examines sources of conflict in Anglican boarding schools in Zimbabwe, with particular attention to governance, accountability and authority relations. Boarding schools combine teaching, residential care, discipline, pastoral responsibility, administration and resource management. In Anglican schools, this complexity is intensified by the interaction between school-level management, diocesan authority, Church expectations and Ministry of Education regulations. The study adopted a qualitative research design based on four focus group discussions conducted in four anonymised Anglican boarding schools, coded as School A, School B, School C and School D. Twenty-four participants took part, representing senior teachers, boarding staff, administrative staff, pastoral staff, finance-related personnel, disciplinary committee members, school committee members and church liaison roles. Data were analysed thematically. The findings revealed eight sources of conflict: governance and leadership, financial management and accountability, procurement and administrative procedures, communication and institutional coordination, policy compliance and institutional dualism, resource allocation and infrastructure, enrolment and admissions, and human resource and staff welfare issues. The article argues that conflict in Anglican boarding schools is largely institutional and structural rather than merely interpersonal. Its original contribution lies in showing how conflict emerges at the Church-State-school interface, where overlapping authority, weak accountability and unclear procedures turn routine decisions into recurrent institutional tension. The article recommends governance clarity, stronger financial oversight, harmonised Church-Ministry procedures, transparent resource allocation and participatory conflict-resolution mechanisms.

Keywords: Anglican boarding schools; conflict analysis; governance; accountability; authority relations; institutional conflict; Zimbabwe; thematic analysis

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Conflict is a central issue in school governance because schools are not only teaching institutions but also organisations shaped by leadership, resources, authority and accountability. Mifsud and Wilkins (2025) show that school governance concerns how authority, responsibility and decision-making are organised within educational institutions. Leithwood (2021) argues that effective school leadership depends upon proper application of power and the capacity of the leader to ensure creation of conditions under which the institution operates properly. Grek, Maroy and Verger (2021) highlight the fact that accountability structures impact the decision-making process, allocation of duties and reaction to pressure. Therefore, in this context, conflict is seen as an institutional problem and not just as a difference of opinion.

Boarding schools are complicated institutions because they have incorporated academic education, residential management, discipline, pastoral care, administration and management in a single organisation. According to UNESCO (2024), the scope of school leadership now encompasses more than class room management but the management of relationship and environment in the school. Hamdi, Sulaiman and Aslamiah (2021) indicate that school conflict results from poor management of administrative duties, leadership and relationships. Lodi et al. (2021) indicate that the resolution of conflicts in the school requires the institution to restore relationships and improve its internal environment instead of taking repressive measures. Thus, boarding schools provide an

excellent setting for the study of conflicts because the decisions of the institution impact both teaching and residential functions.

Anglican boarding schools are even more complicated because they work under both education and ecclesiastical structures. D'Agostino and Asadullah (2025) argue that religion-based education helps in schooling provision but also leads to governance issues related to issues of authority, accountability and institutional identity. As per Scheunpflug et al. (2021), Christian schools in sub-Saharan Africa are affected by the interaction between the church structure and the state schooling system. According to Wodon (2021), religious schools function in plural schooling systems where there is a need to balance religious mission and schooling system's responsibility. In Anglican boarding schools, this kind of dual identity may lead to conflicts because of non-alignment between the church's wishes, the needs of the school's administration and governmental regulations.

The importance of the context of Zimbabwe arises from the role played by the government regulations, accountability requirements and resource issues in school governance. The UNESCO PEER (2024) considers school leadership in Zimbabwe from the perspective that involves principals, middle leaders, committees, governance, autonomy and accountability. Similarly, the Global Partnership for Education and the Government of Zimbabwe (2023) Consider the Zimbabwean educational reforms taking into account the issues of equity, systemic coordination and improvement of learning environment. Based on the observations made by Chimbunde et al., (2023), School Development Committees have an important role in the governance of Zimbabwean schools. Therefore, conflicts in Anglican boarding schools should be examined in terms of school governance.

Problem Statement

Conflicts in Anglican boarding schools arise out of the unclear governance, lack of accountability and overlapping of authorities. According to Diehl and Golann (2023), schools are under pressure from several aspects including policies, accountability, and the communities. As explained by Peng, Alias and Mansor (2024), there are various stakeholders in the education management whose activities have to be coordinated. In addition, Dwangu and Mahlangu (2021) say that financial accountability relates to poor governance and lack of trust in the leadership. It becomes more evident in Anglican boarding schools where Heads, Deputy Heads, Bursars, churches, committees and educational managers work together with no clear mandate for decision-making.

The aspects of financial management, procurement process, admission policies, communication and staff welfare become crucial in terms of connecting institutional authority and school management since they determine the way institutional authority operates. According to Aina and du Plessis (2023), financial governance in fee-charging schools presupposes accountability and responsible decision-making on the part of governing structures. Garcer, Mestry and Motala (2024) stress that the issue of internal financial processes is crucial for transparency and procedural control in schools. Finally, according to Njini and Guvhu (2025), there is a need for effective financial management guidelines in Zimbabwean secondary schools to ensure accountability. The arguments above prove the idea that the lack of budget, school fee and allowance management, procurement procedures and accounting through transparent and consistent procedures cause conflict.

Contradictory policies become an important aspect of the problem because Anglican boarding schools are situated between two different organizations, namely, the church organization and the Ministry of Education. The authors Scheunpflug et al. (2021) highlight the presence of the complex relationship between church and state in the African Christian schools. As it is noted by D'Agostino and Asadullah (2025), faith-based education is connected with both possibilities and controversies within the sphere of governance and development. The authors of the UNESCO PEER (2021) highlight the participation of non-state organizations in education in Zimbabwe among which faith-based organizations should be mentioned. This article considers the institution dualism as an important conflict-causing factor due to the uncertainty of the policy hierarchy that leads to various conflicts.

Significance, Originality and Applicability of the Study

The significance of the above study lies in the fact that this study helps in comprehending conflict in faith-based boarding schools as a governance and accountability issue. According to Mifsud & Wilkins (2025), there are many studies in the area of governance in schools where the researchers have kept themselves focused on examining the way schools are governed, regulated and held accountable. According to Grek, Maroy & Verger

(2021), the accountability system influences the behavior and dynamics of the institutions within the educational systems. According to Shula, van Wyk & Heystek (2022), the leadership aspect of faith-based schools has been considered through the perspective of servant leadership.

The originality of the article lies in its focus on the Church-State-school interface in Anglican boarding schools in Zimbabwe. Existing literature on school conflict frequently addresses leadership behaviour, student discipline, school climate or financial management, but less attention is given to how conflict emerges when ecclesiastical authority, state regulation and school-level management intersect in a boarding context. The study therefore contributes an institutional conflict-analysis perspective that connects leadership, finance, procurement, communication, admissions, staffing and resource allocation within one analytical frame. This makes the study more than a list of conflict sources; it provides a structural explanation of why similar tensions recur across different schools.

The study is also applicable because it produces practical recommendations for school leaders, diocesan authorities, finance committees, boarding administrators and school committees. Klevan (2021) argues that restorative practices can strengthen school climate by improving relationships and trust. Moran et al. (2024) show that teachers' experiences of restorative practices reveal the importance of relational approaches to conflict in schools. However, the present study shows that restorative approaches must be supported by clear structures, written procedures and transparent accountability systems. The article therefore has practical value for Anglican and other faith-based boarding schools that need to reduce conflict without weakening their religious identity or administrative responsibilities.

Research Aim and Research Questions

The article aims to analyse the major sources of conflict in Anglican boarding schools, with specific attention to governance, accountability and authority relations.

Main Research Question

What are the major sources of conflict in Anglican boarding schools, and how are these conflicts shaped by governance, accountability and authority relations?

Sub-Research Questions

1. How do governance and leadership structures contribute to conflict in Anglican boarding schools?
2. How do financial management, procurement procedures and resource allocation practices shape accountability-related conflicts in Anglican boarding schools?
3. How do Church authority, Ministry of Education regulations and school-level management structures influence policy compliance and authority-related conflicts in Anglican boarding schools?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Governance

Governance involves the systems, structures, individuals, and processes involved in decision-making and implementing such decisions in schools. In the words of Mifsud & Wilkins (2025), the school governance literature focuses on the way in which schools are managed and governed and held accountable through different structures. The UNESCO PEER (2024) looks at how the leadership in Zimbabwe's educational institutions can be contextualized in terms of how the roles of the principal, mid-level management, School Management Committee, Board, and accountability can affect governance in schools. According to Chimbunde et al. (2023), the members of the School Development Committee of Zimbabwe take part in governance and decision-making in institutions. Governance of Anglican boarding schools is done using the authority vested in the Head, Deputy, Bursar, Disciplinary Committee, Financial Committee, and the Church.

The governance conflicts within Anglican boarding schools arise because of overlapping powers between the school management and the ecclesiastic structure. Wodon (2021) states that the faith-based schools exist in the framework of pluralistic educational system, thus, it is necessary to strike a balance between the religious mission and public education duties. Scheunpflug et al. (2021) point out that Christian schools are managed via negotiations between the church administration and the state systems. In the words of Diehl & Golann (2023), sometimes schools experience pressures from external agents whose expectations might be different. The above mentioned considerations can explain the conflict of interests between the Anglican boarding school's heads, deputy heads, bursars, responsible authorities, and diocesan offices.

Accountability

Accountability implies the responsibility of school actors to account for, justify and explain their decision-making processes and activities. According to Grek, Maroy and Verger (2021), the concept of accountability in education influences the conduct of institutions in that it involves the obligation of school actors to report, explain and respond to the governance requirements. The authors of Dwangu and Mahlangu (2021) stress the need for financial accountability in schools because of its potential to harm the trust and create governance challenges. Sebidi, Aina and Kgwete (2023) pay attention to the financial accounts of schools and prove that accountability is possible through auditing, transparency and stakeholders' oversight. Financial accountability is especially significant for Anglican boarding schools where accountability is related to issues like fees, budgeting, procurement, allowance, recruitment, disciplinary action and resources distribution.

The issue of financial accountability is crucial due to the fact that school conflicts are often generated by financial matters, privileges and resource control. According to Aina and du Plessis (2023), the responsible financial governance is necessary for fee-paying schools, because the school funds determine the credibility of the institution. The need for financial processes at the internal level is highlighted by Garcer, Mestry and Motala (2024). The importance of clear financial management guidelines is explained by Njini and Guvhu (2025) in the context of Zimbabwean secondary schools. In Anglican boarding schools, the unclear control over the finances can cause the conflict between Heads, Bursars, finance committee members and church authorities.

Authority Relations

Authority relations represent the power relations that can be formal or informal and that are used by school actors to influence decisions, resources and institutional directions. As it is stated by Leithwood (2021), school leaders should exercise their authority in a way that will guarantee equity, efficiency and shared responsibility. Peng, Alias and Mansor (2024) emphasize that educational management relationships have to be organized in such a way that would minimize conflicts and enhance coordination. Moral responsibility of the leadership in faith-based schools is discussed by Shula, van Wyk and Heystek (2022). In Anglican boarding schools, the authority relations are established among Heads, Deputies, Bursars, Church authorities, committees and staff.

The authority relations in Anglican boarding schools can be considered in the context of institutional dualism of Church expectations and State education requirements. According to D'Agostino and Asadullah (2025), faith-based education presents both opportunities and challenges for governance in relation to the participation of religious institutions in provision of public education. UNESCO PEER (2021) affirms that non-state actors participate in education provision in Zimbabwe and function under specific regulation. The Office of the Auditor-General Zimbabwe (2025) points to the broader aspect of the problem of oversight and accountability in the education administration of the country. The above-presented information allows assuming that the authority conflict in Anglican boarding schools does not imply personality conflicts between the leaders. Instead, it is the result of institutional tensions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR CONFLICT ANALYSIS

The article utilized a combined theoretical framework, which includes Conflict Theory, Institutional Theory and Conflict Transformation Theory. The choice of this framework was driven by the fact that the conflict in Anglican boarding schools is not viewed as a single behavioral issue in this study. On the contrary, it is considered an effect of power struggle, lack of clarity of institutional rules, conflicting authority systems and inadequate conflict

resolution mechanisms. According to Pham Xuan (2025), Conflict Theory can be used for studying the educational leadership as a process of reproduction of inequality and conflict via power relations. Institutional Theory as a means for explaining organizational behavior through the lens of rules, norms and expectations is presented by Berthod (2023). Okpara and Yunus (2026) emphasize that conflict transformation implies not only the resolution of a particular conflict but also transformation of structures and relationships. Therefore, the framework enabled the article to interpret conflict as both a governance problem and a reform opportunity.

Conflict Theory

Conflict Theory was applied to explain how power struggles and competition over institutional resources generate tension in Anglican boarding schools. Pham Xuan (2025) suggests that the Conflict Theory is helpful in studying educational leadership as it helps understand how authority, inequality and institutions affect the experience of schooling. In the current research, this view was used to explain the conflicts between Heads, Deputies, Bursars and Church authorities as the issues of control and not misunderstanding. According to Ertürk (2022), conflict in school can be caused by administration, communication and different expectations from schools' actors. Kostovski et al. (2025) prove that the power distance and organizational culture have an effect on the level of school conflict. Used for explaining the conflict in Anglican boarding schools, the Conflict Theory allows stating that the ambiguous authority leads to conflict for influence.

Also, the Conflict Theory was used for interpreting conflicts of the financial character as issues of access, control and equity. Aryeh-Adjei et al. (2026) note that the conflict management in basic education involves the application of the leadership approach based on institutional tensions and stakeholders disagreement. In the current study, the mentioned argument is applicable to the conflicts related to budgeting, fees, allowances, transport, staff accommodation and resources. Rai and Singh (2021) say that there are several reasons for school conflicts such as resources competition, communication problem and weak leadership. Consequently, the Conflict Theory allows the study to understand the financial conflicts not as accounting issues, but as conflicts of authority and benefit distribution.

Institutional Theory

Institutional Theory was applied to explain why Anglican boarding schools experience conflict as organisations located between Church authority and state education regulation. Berthod (2023) explains that Institutional Theory focuses on how organisations are shaped by institutionalised rules, norms and expectations. This was useful because Anglican boarding schools do not operate under one authority system only. UNESCO PEER (2021) confirms that non-state actors, including faith-based providers, form part of Zimbabwe's education system and operate within regulatory governance arrangements. Wu et al. (2023) explain that institutional logics provide a lens for understanding how organisations respond to competing values and rules. Institutional Theory therefore explained why Church policies, diocesan expectations and Ministry regulations may produce role confusion.

Institutional Theory also helped interpret policy compliance conflicts as products of competing institutional logics. Wu et al. (2023) explain that institutional logics affect organizational activity through varying beliefs, value systems, and ideas about proper behavior. For Anglican boarding schools, the Church may focus on ecclesiastical power, mission-driven values, and diocesan management, whereas the Ministry of Education will be more concerned with following regulations, being regulated, and administrative process. According to Sminia (2024), institutional theory is applicable when studying organizations' reactions to institutional pressure. The above points help to understand why school heads give preference to the Ministry while Church officials expect strict following of Church policies.

Conflict Transformation Theory

Conflict Transformation Theory was applied to move the study beyond identifying conflict towards explaining how Anglican boarding schools can reform the conditions that generate conflict. Okpara and Yunus (2026) argue that conflict transformation becomes meaningful when it is connected to longer-term peace-centred development and institutional reconstruction. This view is useful because the conflicts identified in the study are not one-off disagreements that can be solved through temporary mediation only. Pherali (2023) illustrates that education can aid peacebuilding if it tackles structural inequality, social injustice, and other deeper exclusions. Conflict

Transformation Theory suggests that for its proper implementation, there should be the process of governance change, rather than simply dispute resolution.

Conflict Transformation Theory was especially helpful for understanding the role that faith-based organizations play in resolving conflict through repairing relations and structures. Adehanloye (2026) creates a theological concept of conflict transformation which implies that faith-based institutions can engage in peacebuilding processes due to their leadership, relations, and institutional capacity. It becomes relevant for Anglican boarding schools as the power of the Church is a source of governance pressure but at the same time can become a tool for reconciliation and institutional renovation. The theory allowed this paper to consider Anglican identity as the basis for dialogue and accountability.

Relevance of the Integrated Framework to the Study

The integrated framework is relevant because each theory explains a different layer of conflict in Anglican boarding schools. Conflict Theory explains why power struggles emerge around leadership, finance, recruitment, enrolment, procurement and resource allocation. Institutional Theory explains why Anglican boarding schools experience role confusion as they respond to Church, diocesan, school-level and Ministry expectations. Conflict Transformation Theory then explains how these conflicts can be addressed through dialogue, reform and relational reconstruction. Together, the three theories allow the article to argue that conflict in Anglican boarding schools is not simply caused by difficult personalities. It is produced by unclear authority, weak accountability, competing institutional rules and insufficient mechanisms for constructive engagement.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative research design because it sought to understand how school actors interpreted and experienced conflict in Anglican boarding schools. Creswell and Creswell (2023) indicates that it is appropriate for qualitative research to be conducted when the purpose of the study is to investigate meanings, experiences, and social processes and not statistical measurement of variables. According to Leavy (2022), qualitative research enables the investigation of people's experiences in context, particularly when the subject of study is relational, structural and interpretive. Thus, it was appropriate since conflict was investigated as an issue of governance, accountability and authority and not numerically.

The study was framed as a qualitative thematic study because it focused on identifying recurring patterns across focus group discussions. Kiger and Varpio (2020) argue that thematic analysis is useful when researchers need to organise qualitative data into meaningful themes that respond directly to the research question. Bell, Bryman and Harley (2022) explain that qualitative data analysis involves moving from raw accounts to interpreted categories and broader analytical meanings. The design therefore allowed the study to examine how governance ambiguity, financial accountability, procurement, communication, policy dualism, resource allocation, admissions and staff welfare became sources of institutional conflict.

Study Context

The study was conducted in four Anglican boarding schools in Zimbabwe. The schools were anonymised as School A, School B, School C and School D to protect institutional identity and reduce the risk of reputational exposure. One focus group discussion was linked to each anonymised school. Each focus group had six coded participants, giving a total of twenty-four participants across the four schools. This context was appropriate because Anglican boarding schools combine education, residential care, discipline, pastoral responsibility, financial administration and church-related governance. The context therefore provided a suitable setting for examining conflict as both an organisational and institutional phenomenon.

The Zimbabwean Anglican boarding school context was relevant because the study examined conflict where school-level management, church authority and state education expectations intersect. The focus group data contained repeated references to the Head, Diocese, Church authority, Ministry expectations, bursar's office, disciplinary committees, finance committees and school committees. This institutional arrangement created a

focused context for analysing governance and authority relations. The article therefore did not investigate school conflict in general. It examined how conflict was shaped by the specific structure of Anglican boarding schools, where educational administration and ecclesiastical oversight operate within the same institutional space.

Participants, Sampling and Selection Process

The study used purposive sampling because participants needed direct knowledge of school governance, boarding operations, finance, administration, discipline, pastoral care and staff welfare. Nyimbili and Nyimbili (2024) noted that purposive sampling is helpful for qualitative research if the sample participants have the needed knowledge concerning the research issue. Mweshi & Sakyi (2020) further state that the decision to sample should be influenced by the nature of the research and the evidence needed. In this research, purposive sampling was appropriate since the research needed participants who could provide meaningful data about institutional conflicts within Anglican boarding schools.

The selection process focused on role-based relevance rather than demographic representativeness. Participants were selected because their positions exposed them to school governance, boarding welfare, finance, administration, discipline, pastoral care or committee work. Personal demographic variables such as age, gender and length of service were not reported to protect anonymity in a small institutional field. However, role diversity was documented to show the range of institutional perspectives included in the study. This addition strengthens transparency while still protecting participants from possible identification.

Table 1: Focus group composition and role-based participant profile

Focus group	School code	Number of participants	Participant roles represented	Basis for inclusion
FGD1	School A	6	Senior teacher, boarding staff member, administrative staff member, pastoral staff member, support staff representative and middle-level administrator	Direct experience of school leadership, boarding operations, administration, pastoral care and staff welfare
FGD2	School B	6	Teacher-in-charge, boarding matron, accounts assistant, disciplinary committee member, chaplaincy representative and senior administrator	Direct involvement in teaching coordination, boarding care, accounts, discipline, chaplaincy and administration
FGD3	School C	6	Senior boarding administrator, teacher representative, finance committee member, administrative officer, discipline team member and church liaison representative	Direct knowledge of boarding administration, teaching, finance committee work, discipline, administration and church-school liaison
FGD4	School D	6	Senior teacher, hostel supervisor, finance/administration representative, school committee member, pastoral care representative and deputy-level administrator	Direct exposure to teaching, hostel supervision, finance, school committee oversight, pastoral care and deputy-level administration

The sample consisted of twenty-four participants drawn from four focus group discussions, with six participants in each focus group. Bekele and Ago (2022) argue that qualitative sample size should be judged by depth, relevance and richness rather than statistical representativeness. Hennink and Kaiser (2022) show that qualitative saturation depends on the repetition and depth of information generated across cases. In this study, similar concerns appeared across the four schools, including unclear authority, financial suspicion, procurement concerns, delayed communication, policy contradictions, resource disputes, admissions pressure and inconsistent disciplinary or welfare practices. This repetition strengthened the credibility of the themes while still requiring caution about generalisation beyond the study sites.

Data Collection

Data were collected through four focus group discussions guided by a focus group discussion schedule. Dang, Van Nguyen and Tran (2024) explain that qualitative data collection is suitable where researchers need detailed accounts of participants' views, experiences and interpretations. Broache (2022) emphasises that interviews and group discussions must be planned carefully so that the questions remain aligned with the research objectives. Turner and Hagstrom-Schmidt (2022) argue that qualitative interview design should use open-ended questions that encourage participants to explain their experiences in their own words. In this study, the focus group questions were aligned with governance, accountability and authority relations.

The focus group discussion schedule contained ten guiding questions on the main types of conflict in Anglican boarding schools, governance and leadership structures, financial management, procurement procedures, communication, Church-Ministry policy tensions, resource allocation, admissions, human resource issues and conflict management strategies. The same guiding questions were used across School A, School B, School C and School D, which supported consistency in data collection. At the same time, the open-ended nature of the questions allowed participants to raise specific examples from their own school experiences.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed using thematic analysis. Kiger and Varpio (2020) describe thematic analysis as a flexible qualitative method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data. Bell, Bryman and Harley (2022) explain that qualitative analysis involves reducing large amounts of textual data into codes, categories and themes without losing the meaning of participants' accounts. Mezmur (2020) similarly, data reduction, data presentation and interpretation are crucial steps in qualitative data analysis. In this research, there was an extensive reading of the focus group responses in order to highlight the repeated themes associated with conflicts in Anglican boarding schools.

The process utilized both deductive and inductive reasoning. Fife and Gossner (2024) explain that deductive qualitative analysis can be used where theory or prior concepts guide interpretation while still allowing refinement. In this study, the deductive element came from the article's focus on governance, accountability and authority relations. The inductive element came from participants' repeated emphasis on bursar influence, diocesan interference, irregular procurement, admissions pressure, boarding resource strain and staff welfare concerns. Eight themes were generated: governance and leadership conflicts, financial management and accountability, procurement and administrative procedures, communication and institutional coordination, policy compliance and institutional dualism, resource allocation and infrastructure conflicts, enrolment and admissions conflicts, and human resource and staff welfare issues.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was strengthened through role diversity, cross-focus group comparison, systematic coding and direct use of participant quotations. Lemon and Hayes (2020) emphasise that qualitative trustworthiness can be enhanced when researchers use systematic strategies to strengthen confidence in the findings. Reyes, Bogumil and Welch (2021) argue that documenting the coding process improves transparency by making analytical decisions traceable. The study also drew on reporting principles consistent with COREQ and SRQR, which emphasise transparency in qualitative research design, context, sampling, data collection, analysis and interpretation. The use of coded quotations allowed the article to demonstrate the evidentiary basis for each theme without exposing individual identities.

Ethical Considerations

The study protected participants and schools through anonymity, confidentiality and coded reporting. Participants were coded as FGD1-P1 to FGD1-P6, FGD2-P1 to FGD2-P6, FGD3-P1 to FGD3-P6 and FGD4-P1 to FGD4-P6. The schools were identified only as School A, School B, School C and School D. This was ethically necessary because the study dealt with sensitive matters, including financial accountability, church authority, staff welfare, procurement, admissions and leadership conflict. Mannheimer (2024) emphasises that qualitative data require careful handling when information can expose people or institutions. The coding system therefore reduced the

risk of identification and protected participants from possible professional harm.

FINDINGS

The findings were generated from four focus group discussions conducted in four anonymised Anglican boarding schools in Zimbabwe. The analysis produced eight major themes: governance and leadership conflicts, financial management and accountability, procurement and administrative procedures, communication and institutional coordination, policy compliance and institutional dualism, resource allocation and infrastructure conflicts, enrolment and admissions conflicts, and human resource and staff welfare issues. Across the four focus groups, conflict appeared less as isolated interpersonal disagreement and more as an institutional problem shaped by unclear roles, weak procedures, contested authority and limited transparency.

Governance and Leadership Conflicts

Governance and leadership conflict emerged as the most central theme across the focus group discussions. Participants repeatedly linked conflict to unclear authority structures, overlapping responsibilities and uncertainty over final decision-making powers. The formal structure of leadership existed in principle, but participants felt that it was not consistently respected in practice. Conflict was particularly visible in relations among Heads, Deputy Heads, Bursars, school committees and Church or diocesan authorities. This suggests that governance conflict was not mainly caused by the absence of leadership positions, but by uncertainty over how those positions should relate to one another in actual decision-making.

FGD1-P6: “When a decision is difficult, we do not know who has the last word. Is it the school leadership, the board, or church office? That confusion causes conflict.”

FGD2-P1: “The Head is supposed to lead, but the Head is not always left to lead. Someone from outside can call and say, ‘do this’, and then the Head must explain to staff. It makes the leadership look weak.”

FGD3-P2: “Power struggles are real. Deputies, Heads and bursars may all have strong personalities. If they are not guided by clear structures, the school becomes a battlefield.”

FGD4-P4: “The school committee must also understand its role. Some committee members want to manage daily operations, yet their role should be oversight. That causes conflict with management.”

These responses show that governance conflict was produced by role ambiguity and competing centres of authority. The Head’s authority was weakened when instructions came directly from external Church structures or when Deputy Heads and committees acted beyond their expected roles. Participants also suggested that Bursars sometimes exercised influence beyond financial administration, creating a perception that financial authority could override school leadership. The repeated concern about “who has the last word” indicates that the schools lacked a clearly operationalised authority hierarchy.

Financial Management and Accountability

Financial management emerged as a major source of conflict because participants associated money with suspicion, unequal treatment and weak institutional accountability. Across the four schools, participants referred to school fees, budgets, allowances, claims, supplier payments and resource funding as recurring causes of tension. Financial conflict was not always based on proven misuse of money. Rather, it often developed where information was not shared, budgets were not followed, or stakeholders did not understand why some financial requests were approved while others were delayed or rejected.

FGD1-P3: “Financial issues bring a lot of suspicion. Staff hear that money was collected, but they do not see improvements. Then they start asking, where did the money go? Even if there is no theft, the silence creates mistrust.”

FGD2-P1: “Transparency is weak. Staff do not need to control finances, but they need explanations. Without explanations, people create stories.”

FGD3-P3: “Financial management creates conflict when controls are weak. For example, if collections are not reconciled properly, people begin to suspect leakage. Even rumours can damage trust.”

FGD4-P6: “Budget discipline is weak. Once approved, the budget should guide decisions. But in practice, urgent requests and powerful voices can change priorities.”

The findings indicate that financial conflict was closely linked to accountability gaps. Participants did not demand direct control over finances, but they expected explanation, reporting and consistency. Delays in Travel and Subsistence payments, unequal benefits, unfulfilled departmental requests and unclear budget implementation contributed to perceptions of favouritism. Thus, financial conflict was not only about resource scarcity. It was about whether financial decisions were transparent, procedurally justified and aligned with approved institutional priorities.

Procurement and Administrative Procedures

Procurement and administrative procedures were identified as another major source of conflict. Participants expressed concern that procurement rules and Standard Operating Procedures were sometimes bypassed, manipulated or applied inconsistently. Procurement conflict arose when purchases were made before proper documentation, when the same suppliers appeared repeatedly without clear justification, or when administrative staff were expected to regularise irregular transactions after the fact. In this sense, procurement conflict was both procedural and ethical, especially because participants expected Anglican schools to model integrity.

FGD1-P3: “Sometimes they buy first and look for papers later. That one creates problems because the documents will not match what really happened. People in admin then feel forced to clean up mistakes.”

FGD2-P6: “Once procurement is irregular, even the product becomes suspicious. People may not question the item; they question the process.”

FGD3-P6: “From a church point of view, procedure is also an ethical issue. If we fail in small administrative honesty, we lose credibility with staff and parents.”

FGD4-P5: “Procedure protects relationships. When procedure is ignored, people feel cheated, even if the intention was not bad.”

These findings show that procurement conflict damaged institutional trust because it created uncertainty over fairness, accountability and motive. Participants did not only object to the practical outcome of procurement decisions; they objected to the appearance of hidden influence and discretionary power. Proper procedure was viewed not as bureaucratic delay, but as a protective mechanism that preserved fairness, transparency and relationships.

Communication and Institutional Coordination

Communication breakdowns were repeatedly identified as a source of mistrust and misunderstanding. Participants described communication as late, selective, indirect, centralised and sometimes harsh in tone. Poor communication affected both internal school operations and school-church coordination. Participants were concerned that important decisions were sometimes communicated informally, verbally or through only one person, which allowed messages to change, be denied or be misunderstood. Boarding staff were particularly affected because they often implemented decisions without having been included in the discussions that produced those decisions.

FGD1-P1: “Sometimes information comes as a rumour before it comes officially. By the time management speaks, people already have their own version.”

FGD2-P1: “Communication is selective. Some staff receive information quickly because they are close to management. Others hear later. That creates camps, like insiders and outsiders.”

FGD3-P4: “Minutes are important, but sometimes meetings are held and no minutes circulate. Later people disagree on what was decided.”

FGD4-P6: “The Diocese and school must have formal communication protocols. A directive should say who issued it, who receives it, and how it must be implemented.”

The findings suggest that weak communication intensified conflict by creating information inequality. Those who received information early were perceived as insiders, while those excluded from communication felt marginalised. Communication was therefore not a minor administrative issue. It was a governance mechanism that affected trust, implementation and accountability.

Policy Compliance and Institutional Dualism

Policy compliance and institutional dualism formed one of the strongest themes in the data. Participants consistently described Anglican boarding schools as institutions pulled between Church expectations and Ministry of Education regulations. Both authorities were regarded as legitimate, but participants experienced difficulty when the two systems used different procedures, language, priorities or enforcement mechanisms. This created uncertainty in discipline, finance, reporting, admissions and general school management. The conflict was therefore structural because it came from the school’s location between ecclesiastical and state governance systems.

FGD1-P4: “Policies are treated like separate books. One book for government, one book for church. But school life is one place, so conflict comes.”

FGD2-P5: “The school is pulled by two hands. The Ministry focuses on regulations, procedures and learner rights. The Church also focuses on doctrine, values and institutional identity.”

FGD3-P6: “Church policy may speak in moral and pastoral language, while Ministry policy speaks in legal and administrative language. People interpret them differently.”

FGD4-P5: “The challenge is that both authorities are legitimate. The Church owns or sponsors the institution, but the Ministry regulates education. So the school cannot ignore either side.”

The findings reveal that institutional dualism created conflict because school actors had to interpret and apply two systems of authority within one operational space. Participants did not reject either the Church or the Ministry. Instead, they pointed to the lack of harmonisation between the two. The analysis therefore suggests that policy conflict is not caused by the existence of Church and State authority, but by the absence of an integrated framework for managing both.

Resource Allocation and Infrastructure Conflicts

Resource allocation and infrastructure conflicts were strongly linked to fairness, transparency and perceived favouritism. Participants discussed disputes over staff houses, school buses, vehicles, fuel, boarding supplies, stationery, repairs and operational resources. Resource scarcity was real, but scarcity alone did not fully explain the conflict. Participants repeatedly emphasised that conflict became worse when allocation criteria were not explained or when some departments appeared to receive preferential access to resources. In boarding schools, such disputes were especially serious because resource decisions directly affected learner welfare, safety and daily residential operations.

FGD1-P1: “Resources are few, yes, but scarcity alone is not the problem. The problem is how decisions are explained. If people understand the criteria, they may accept it.”

FGD2-P2: “The staff houses are the worst, honestly. People compare roofs, bathrooms, distance from school, even size of yard. Without a written housing policy, it is just quarrels.”

FGD3-P1: “Resource allocation is where people feel fairness or unfairness. If one department always gets the bus, others start feeling invisible.”

FGD4-P3: “Fuel allocation also causes conflict. Departments submit requests, but fuel is limited. Without a clear logbook and approval system, people suspect abuse.”

Infrastructure-related conflict reflected deeper concerns about recognition, fairness and institutional trust. Staff housing was not only accommodation; it symbolised status and value within the institution. Vehicle access was not only transport; it reflected whose work was treated as urgent or important. Where allocation systems were unclear, resource scarcity became personalised and staff interpreted decisions as favouritism rather than institutional prioritisation.

Enrolment and Admissions Conflicts

Enrolment and admissions emerged as a contested area because participants linked admissions decisions to authority, finance, boarding capacity and external influence. Across the focus groups, participants described admission lists coming from outside normal school channels, pressure to admit learners connected to influential people, and situations where learners were admitted before financial clearance. Boarding capacity was also a repeated concern because admissions decisions affected dormitory space, learner welfare and staff workload. Admissions conflict was therefore not only about who entered the school, but about who had the authority to decide.

FGD1-P6: “Admissions is very political, eh, maybe not party politics, but institutional politics. Lists can come from outside the normal school process, and then the school is expected to just accept.”

FGD2-P6: “Admissions can be influenced by relationships. A name comes through a church official, an old student, or someone with power. The school then struggles to say no.”

FGD3-P1: “Boarding capacity must be respected. When admissions ignore dormitory space, we start improvising. Improvising with children is risky.”

FGD4-P6: “Admissions conflict comes from unclear final authority. The school has capacity limits, but external actors may still push names.”

Admissions became conflictual because they sat at the intersection of institutional mission, financial sustainability and operational capacity. Church actors could view admissions through pastoral or relational considerations, while school administrators had to consider fees, space, standards and safety. Participants did not reject compassionate admissions for vulnerable learners, but they insisted that such decisions needed clear criteria. Without transparent procedures, admissions appeared to be influenced by relationships and power.

Human Resource and Staff Welfare Issues

The areas of Human Resource and staff welfare were found to be key issues causing conflicts in light of their connection to such themes as morale, justice, recognition and trust in the institution. Staff members were worried about lack of clarity in their recruitment mandate, lack of equality in terms of development opportunities for all staff members, uneven application of punishment, insufficient recognition of boarding efforts, as well as insufficient concern for the emotional wellbeing of staff members. In particular, boarding staff expressed the problem of being overworked and having high responsibility without enough participation in decisions concerning them. This suggests that staff welfare conflict was not only about material benefits, but also about voice, respect and procedural fairness.

FGD1-P4: “Staff welfare is not always taken seriously. People work long hours, especially in boarding, but appreciation is low. So small disagreements become emotional because staff are already tired.”

FGD2-P4: “Disciplinary procedures are not always consistent. One person is punished quickly, another person with connections is protected. That is where resentment grows.”

FGD3-P1: “Welfare is about listening. Staff may not even ask for money always. Sometimes they want a fair duty roster, rest time, and respect.”

FGD4-P6: “Recruitment needs clear authority. Who recommends? Who approves? Who appoints? If those stages are not clear, appointments become contested.”

Weak human resource governance damaged morale and encouraged resistance. When staff felt ignored, they were less willing to implement decisions, even when those decisions were institutionally necessary. Inconsistent disciplinary processes weakened trust because they created the impression that connections mattered more than rules. Staff welfare was therefore central to conflict prevention because exhausted, unheard or unfairly treated staff were more likely to interpret institutional decisions negatively.

DISCUSSION

How do governance and leadership structures contribute to conflict in Anglican boarding schools?

Governance and leadership systems created ambiguity and confusion regarding the rightful decision-making authority. This study showed cases where Church authorities issued direct instructions to staff, Deputies did things without the approval of their Heads, Bursars seemed to be influencing decision-making in areas other than financial, and school committees went from supervisory role to managerial role. These results support the findings by Mifsud and Wilkins (2025) that the problem with the governance of schools lies in the different perceptions of authority, participation and accountability in different school systems. But in contrast to these results, this study shows that the issue of governance becomes even more complex in case of Anglican boarding schools due to the fact that the school-level leadership system operates within the framework of the ecclesiastical authority and government regulation.

The current study results also prove that conflicts related to the leadership became even more severe when formal authority was undermined by informal influence. Chimbunde et al. (2023) stress the importance of participation of School Development Committees in school governance in Zimbabwe. The current study confirms this assumption but also shows that conflicts may arise due to non-differentiation between supervision, support and managerial control by stakeholders. Håkansson and Adolfsson (2022) show that tensions arise within coupled school systems when different levels of authority attempt to manage quality, leadership and accountability. The current findings corroborate this argument but add a faith-based dimension: Anglican boarding schools experience coupling not only between state and school, but also between Church, Diocese, school leadership and committees.

The answer to the first research question is therefore that governance and leadership structures contribute to conflict when authority is overlapping, delegated responsibilities are unclear, and accountability structures are weak. The participant statement that “governance conflict is the umbrella” is especially important because it suggests that finance, admissions, procurement, staff welfare and resource disputes often begin as authority problems. This interpretation strengthens the originality of the article by showing that conflict analysis in Anglican boarding schools must begin with institutional design, not only with interpersonal behaviour.

How do financial management, procurement procedures and resource allocation practices shape accountability-related conflicts in Anglican boarding schools?

Financial management played a significant role in shaping conflict through mistrust resulting from lack of proper explanations regarding income, expenditure, allowances and budget decisions. The participants did not assert the mismanagement of funds; they asserted that poor communication, lack of transparency and poor decision-making created mistrust. This reinforces Dwangu and Mahlangu (2021), who posit that accountability is an integral part of school financial management since it makes it possible for leaders to justify financial decisions. This finding reinforces Garcer, Mestry and Motala (2024), who stress the importance of internal financial management as a way of avoiding mismanagement. Accountability was lacking not just in situations of lack of funds but of poor explanation of fund-related decisions.

Procurement practices shaped conflict because breaches of procedure were interpreted as signs of unfairness and possible abuse of discretion. Participants described purchases made before documentation, repeated use of the same suppliers, weak adherence to quotations and attempts to regularise procurement after the fact. The findings

corroborate school financial-management literature by showing that internal controls matter, but they extend it by showing that, in Anglican schools, irregular procurement also weakens moral authority. Participants expected Church schools to model integrity. Therefore, procurement failures became not only administrative weaknesses but also contradictions of the values the schools claimed to represent.

Conflict was created by allocation procedures that made staff feel like decision-making was being done fairly or unfairly. The issue of staff housing, transport, buses, fuel, boarding materials and other resources came up repeatedly during interviews. According to Njini and Guvhu (2025), there is need for Zimbabwean secondary schools to develop financial management guidelines that would help improve decision-making and accountability. The results are consistent with this assertion in that the participants expressed the need for written housing policies, booking of vehicles, clear criteria and functioning committees. In addition to confirming the need for better financial management in schools, the results add value to existing literature by indicating that conflict related to resources is symbolic.

With regard to the second research question, financial management, procurement and resource allocation create conflict through reduced confidence in accountability systems. According to Transparency International Zimbabwe (2021), there are several corruption risks in the education sector, and transparency and integrity of school processes are crucial in this regard. However, the current results cannot be taken to prove corruption since that would not be an accurate representation of them. Instead, the results show that lack of transparency gives rise to perceptions of favouritism, leakages and influence regardless of whether corruption is happening.

How do Church authority, Ministry of Education regulations and school-level management structures influence policy compliance and authority-related conflicts?

Church authority, Ministry regulations and school-level management structures influenced conflict by placing Anglican boarding schools under multiple legitimate but sometimes poorly harmonised expectations. Participants described the school as being pulled between Church policies and Ministry procedures. They explained that the Church often emphasised values, identity, pastoral sensitivity and moral expectations, while the Ministry emphasised regulation, documentation, learner rights and procedural compliance. UNESCO PEER (2024) shows that Zimbabwe's school leadership profile includes principals, middle leaders, school management committees, boards, parents, governance, autonomy and accountability. The findings corroborate this broader policy picture because Anglican schools are not governed through one actor only; they operate within layered authority arrangements.

It can be seen from the findings that regulation by the Ministry had more weight since this was associated with the presence of inspectors, legal implications and formal processes. At the same time, the participants were concerned about the possibility of undermining the Anglican identity of the school by neglecting the policy of the Church. According to the Global Partnership for Education and Government of Zimbabwe (2023), the current reform agenda in Zimbabwean education involves the need for coordination at the system level. The findings contribute to this reform perspective by demonstrating the necessity to ensure the same coordination at school level. Compliance policy conflict happens in situations when both Church and State policies are legitimate while no operational link exists between them.

In relation to authority-related conflicts, the issue of uncertainty regarding final decision-making powers can be mentioned. The participants talked about lists of students that were prepared outside the school, neglecting recommendations of the disciplinary committee, direct communication of the Church authorities with the staff members, and the involvement of school committees in day-to-day activities. Verger et al. (2024) state that school autonomy with accountability exists in various forms depending on the political, administrative and professional tradition. In accordance with the findings, Anglican boarding schools can be said to have some autonomy but undefined boundaries of accountability.

Original Contribution and Practical Applicability

The overall discussion shows that conflict in Anglican boarding schools was primarily structural, procedural and relational rather than merely interpersonal. The findings across the three research questions suggest that leadership conflict, financial mistrust, procurement concerns, resource disputes and policy contradictions all

shared a common root: unclear authority and weak accountability. The article contributes to school governance literature by showing that faith-based boarding school conflict cannot be understood without examining governance boundaries, institutional identity and administrative transparency together. This is the article's central original contribution.

The practical applicability of the findings lies in the development of a governance-based conflict-transformation model. This model requires role clarification, procedural accountability, policy harmonisation, transparent communication, fair resource allocation and structured pastoral listening. The findings do not contradict the literature reviewed; instead, they corroborate the centrality of governance and accountability while extending the analysis to the Church-State-school interface. This makes the article useful for Anglican education authorities, school Heads, diocesan offices, school committees, finance committees and boarding administrators who need practical tools for reducing conflict before it escalates into institutional breakdown.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are drawn directly from the focus group findings. Participants did not call for conflict management as a once-off response to disputes; they called for institutional reform in governance, finance, procurement, communication, policy alignment, resource allocation, admissions and staff welfare. The recommendations therefore respond to the central finding that conflict in Anglican boarding schools is produced by unclear authority, weak accountability and inconsistent procedures.

Clarify Governance Roles and Authority Structures

Anglican education authorities should develop a clear governance manual that defines the roles of Heads, Deputy Heads, Bursars, school committees, disciplinary committees, finance committees and diocesan authorities. The findings showed that conflict emerged when school actors were uncertain about who had final decision-making authority. The written structure for governance must have well-defined reporting lines, delegation lines, decision-making power and escalation policies. The manual must be used during meetings and day-to-day management, and not just be a formality.

Strengthen Financial Accountability

Financial accountability of Anglican boarding schools can be improved through frequent budgeting reports, periodic financial statements and income and expenditure statement, proper allowance processes and fee collection process. The findings showed that financial conflict was often caused by suspicion rather than confirmed misuse of money. Schools should therefore provide enough financial information to reduce rumours without compromising confidential financial records. Financial accountability should also include clear documentation of arrears, supplier commitments, boarding expenditure and departmental allocations.

Enforce Procurement and Administrative Procedures

Procurement and administrative procedures should be enforced consistently so that irregular procurement is prevented rather than regularised after goods or services have already been obtained. Anglican schools should establish procurement committees, maintain supplier records, document emergency purchases and require written explanations where normal procedures cannot be followed. Procedure should not be treated as unnecessary bureaucracy. In this study, procedure emerged as a protection for fairness, credibility and institutional trust.

Establish Formal Communication Protocols

Schools and diocesan offices should establish formal communication protocols to reduce rumours, contradictory instructions and selective information sharing. Communication protocols should specify who issues official directives, who receives them, how they are recorded, and how they are shared across departments. Important decisions should be written, dated and minuted. Communication should also be respectful in tone because participants indicated that harsh communication could generate conflict even where the instruction itself was correct.

Harmonise Church and Ministry Policies

Anglican education authorities should develop a harmonised governance framework that aligns Church policies with Ministry of Education regulations. Joint training should be provided for Heads, Deputies, Bursars, Chaplains, Church representatives and committee members. Such training should focus on practical scenarios where Church expectations and Ministry procedures appear to conflict, so that decisions are guided by agreed principles rather than case-by-case interpretation.

Develop Transparent Resource Allocation Policies

Schools should develop transparent policies for the allocation of vehicles, buses, fuel, staff houses, boarding supplies, stationery and other operational resources. A clear housing policy should state allocation criteria, waiting-list procedures and review mechanisms. A vehicle and bus policy should include booking procedures, priority categories, approval authority and logbook requirements. Boarding resources should also be planned visibly because learners' welfare depends on food, water, bedding, repairs, transport and health support.

Reform Admissions and Enrolment Procedures

Admissions and enrollment policies need to be revised such that the ultimate power is clear, boarding capacity is protected, and admissions are linked to financial and welfare planning. Admissions committees must be established that comprise of school leadership, finance, boarding, and pastoral interests. Admission policies must take into account academic standards, boarding capacity, clearing of fees, protection of vulnerable learners and health and safety issues. The issue of compassionate admissions needs to be formalized through a bursary system.

Strengthen Human Resource Governance

Human resource governance should be strengthened through transparent recruitment, fair staff development, consistent disciplinary procedures and planned staff welfare support. Schools should create clear HR procedures covering recruitment stages, appointment authority, training selection criteria, disciplinary implementation and grievance reporting. Staff welfare should also be treated as a planned governance issue, not only a crisis response. This is especially important for boarding staff, whose work involves long hours, learner supervision, emergencies and emotional labour.

Institutionalise Restorative and Pastoral Conflict Resolution

Anglican boarding schools should institutionalise conflict-resolution processes that combine professional procedure with pastoral listening. Participants wanted conflict resolution to be fair, respectful and consistent with the Christian identity of the schools. They also emphasised that not every complaint should be interpreted as rebellion; sometimes staff wanted to be heard before conflict escalated. Anglican boarding schools should therefore create safe reporting spaces, structured dialogue forums and restorative meetings where appropriate. However, pastoral listening should not replace formal accountability; it should operate alongside clear procedures.

Table 2: Practical implementation framework drawn from the study findings

Conflict area	Recommended action	Responsible actors	Expected practical value
Governance and leadership	Develop and use a governance manual with clear reporting lines and delegation limits.	Diocesan education authority, Heads, school committees	Reduces uncertainty over final authority and limits informal interference.
Finance and accountability	Produce termly income-and-expenditure summaries and strengthen finance committee oversight.	Heads, Bursars, finance committees	Reduces rumours, suspicion and perceptions of unequal financial treatment.
Procurement	Require documented procurement procedures, supplier records and written	Procurement committees, Bursars, administrators	Protects transparency and prevents post-hoc regularisation of irregular

	emergency justifications.		purchases.
Communication	Use official written protocols, minutes and dated directives for important decisions.	Heads, diocesan offices, administrators	Limits contradictory instructions, selective communication and denial of decisions.
Church-Ministry policy alignment	Provide joint scenario-based training on Church expectations and Ministry requirements.	Diocesan authorities, Ministry-linked officials, school leaders	Improves policy compliance and reduces case-by-case interpretation.
Resources and infrastructure	Create housing, vehicle, fuel and boarding resource allocation policies.	Heads, boarding administrators, resource committees	Improves fairness and reduces perceptions of favouritism.
Admissions and enrolment	Establish admissions committees and capacity-linked admission criteria.	Heads, finance, boarding and pastoral representatives	Protects boarding capacity, financial planning and compassionate admissions.
Human resources and welfare	Clarify recruitment, staff development, discipline and welfare procedures.	Heads, HR-related committees, diocesan office	Improves morale, fairness and trust in staff management.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study provides in-depth qualitative insight into conflict in Anglican boarding schools, but it has limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study relied on four focus group discussions from four anonymised schools. This design allowed participants to describe conflict in detail, but it does not allow statistical claims about the prevalence or intensity of conflict across all Anglican boarding schools in Zimbabwe. The findings should therefore be treated as analytically transferable rather than statistically generalisable. They show how conflict is experienced and interpreted in the selected schools, but they do not measure how frequently each conflict source occurs across the wider population of schools.

Second, the study focused on participants with direct involvement in school governance, administration, boarding care, finance, discipline, pastoral care and committee work. This strengthened the relevance of the data, but it also means that other stakeholder voices were not fully represented. Future research should include diocesan authorities, government education officials, parents, board members and learners where ethically appropriate. Their inclusion would provide a more holistic picture of how authority, accountability and conflict are understood by those who influence, experience or are affected by boarding school governance.

Third, the study did not collect detailed demographic variables such as age, gender and length of service because of the need to protect anonymity within a small institutional field. Future studies could collect such data in a way that preserves confidentiality, especially if the sample is expanded across more schools and dioceses. A larger multi-site design would make it possible to examine whether experiences of conflict differ by role, gender, region, school size, length of service or institutional history.

Future studies should consider mixed-methods designs. A survey could measure the frequency, perceived intensity and institutional impact of conflict sources identified in this study, while interviews or focus groups could continue to explore meanings and experiences in depth. Such a design would respond directly to the need for broader applicability while preserving the interpretive richness of qualitative inquiry. Comparative studies could also examine whether similar conflict patterns appear in other mission, Catholic, Methodist, Lutheran or independent boarding schools. This would strengthen understanding of whether the Church-State-school interface identified in this article is specifically Anglican or more broadly characteristic of faith-based boarding education.

CONCLUSION

This article analysed conflict in Anglican boarding schools as an institutional problem rooted in governance, accountability and authority relations. The findings showed that conflict was not merely interpersonal, emotional or accidental. It was deeply connected to unclear governance structures, overlapping authority, weak financial transparency, inconsistent procurement, poor communication, policy contradictions, contested admissions and

fragile human resource systems. Participants across the four focus groups repeatedly indicated that small disputes became serious because there was no clear way of deciding who had authority, which procedure should be followed, and how decisions should be communicated. The article therefore concludes that conflict in Anglican boarding schools is best understood as structural and procedural before it is treated as personal.

The study also showed that the Anglican boarding school context is shaped by institutional dualism. Schools are accountable to Ministry of Education regulations, but they also carry Anglican identity, Church expectations and diocesan authority. This dual structure is not inherently problematic. Conflict emerges when Church and Ministry expectations are not harmonised, when school leaders receive competing instructions, and when committees or external authorities interfere in operational decisions without clear boundaries. Conflict management in Anglican boarding schools cannot therefore depend only on mediation after disputes occur. It requires a governance framework that makes authority visible, accountable and procedurally consistent.

However, the central contribution of the article lies in the fact that it makes connection between conflict analysis and institutional change. According to the results, it is possible for Anglican boarding schools to minimize conflicts through role definition in governance, financial accountability, procurement, communication formalization, policy coordination between the Church and the Ministry, transparency in resource allocation, admission policies and staff welfare schemes. While these changes will not solve all the differences, they can help minimize the uncertainty and distrust which create conflicts out of ordinary institutional frictions. Conflicts can thus be turned into a learning experience for institutions.

Overall, sustainable conflict transformation in Anglican boarding schools requires both administrative discipline and pastoral sensitivity. Administrative discipline is needed because schools require written procedures, functioning committees, transparent records and clear authority structures. Pastoral sensitivity is also needed because Anglican schools are moral communities where staff, learners and leaders expect fairness, listening and respect. The strongest way forward is therefore not to choose between Church identity and professional governance, but to integrate them. Anglican boarding schools in Zimbabwe can strengthen their institutional witness when authority is exercised transparently, accountability is shared fairly, and conflict is addressed before it becomes institutional breakdown.

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