Causes and implications of organizational school conflicts: A theoretical approach

Christos Grammatikopoulos

Abstract

Organizational conflicts - whether interpersonal or team-based - result from interaction that takes place between organizational stakeholders, and are believed to be normal and a part of everyday organizational life. Conflicts, as a result of administrative processes and procedures and interpersonal relationships, are inevitable in schools, due to the fact that schools are composed of a large number of heterogeneous stakeholders (teachers, principals, support staff, students, and parents), and constitute human-centered social organizations that are characterized by a high level of interaction. The causes of conflicts are personal and organizational, and are linked to differences in culture, ideas, aspirations, behaviors, and goals. More specifically, in schools, conflicts are mostly caused by the way that tasks are performed, and also result from personal differences, and the school's leadership. The implications of conflicts can be both negative (dysfunctional) and positive (functional). In specific, they may cause various emotions to school stakeholders, such as tension, anger, disappointment, a sense of worthlessness and resignation, and thinking of giving up. On the other hand, however, they can result in better decision-making, improved team cooperation and cohesion, innovation, productive change, development, and efficiency. School conflicts should be treated as a common problem that needs to be collectively addressed and resolved, in order to promote organizational goals. Various means can qualify for managing it, such as adopting a multifaceted approach, evaluating and addressing any problems that may emerge, and engaging in constructive debate to seek optimum solutions.

Keywords: schools, teachers, principals, conflicts, causes, implications, cooperation, efficiency

Introduction

When people share common environments, the development of conflicts is inevitable, and it could be argued that this is perfectly normal. In fact, it is not possible to imagine a conflict-free organization, since every organization is made up of people with different ideas, thoughts, and emotions. Therefore, it is normal for rivalry, dispute, and conflicting needs and goals to emerge, when people are required to work and coexist with other stakeholders of an organization. Conflicts are inherent in the life of individuals, teams, and organizations, and this should be expected, because conflicts are associated with interaction. The concept of conflict has existed since the dawn of humanity. The issue of conflicts has dominated organizational life since the 1970s, especially in the United States, followed by its spread all over the world (Doğan, 2016). According to Tjosvold (1991), conflicts play a key part in organizational thinking, supervision, performance, and management. In this context, it has been acknowledged that conflicts are part of everyday organizational life.

Conflicts, in the form of either administrative or normal operating processes and procedures, are inevitable in schools, since the latter are human-centered (Yaraş & Gündüzalp, 2021) and social organizations (Manesis, Vlachou, & Mitropoulou, 2019). In more particular, when it comes to social organizations, conflicts are inevitable in them, due to the presence of organizational structures, processes and procedures, and rules and regulations (Athanasoula-Reppa, 2008; Lockyer, Crick, & Annette, 2003; Bourantas, 2002; Nikolaou, 2019). Teachers, support staff, and students spend a lot of time together in schools. Conflicts are absolutely normal for both teachers and students in schools, where there are conflicting differences in culture, personality, values, beliefs, attitudes, needs, tastes, goals, interests, and power (Göksoy & Argon, 2016).

1. The concept of organizational school conflict

Various definitions of the concept of conflict are provided in literature. According to these definitions, conflict can be described as a dispute that emerges on either a personal or team level, and affects negatively the fulfillment of the social, psychological, and physical needs of individuals, as it is argued by Eren and Peker & Aytürk (as it cited in Yaraş & Gündüzalp, 2021: 398). Although there is no single definition that is commonly accepted by researchers, the concept of interdependence among individuals and/or groups of individuals should be taken into consideration, since it is essential for conflict to occur (Deutsch, 1973; Manesis, Vlachou, & Mitropoulou, 2019; Rahim, 2001; Robbins, 1974). Actually, conflict is a difference in goals among individuals, groups of individuals, and organizations (Hocker & Wilnat, 1985). It is an interactive situation that is based on differences among individuals and groups of individuals (Shahin, 2019). Therefore, conflict is a social phenomenon that is experienced as a result of dispute that arises in the context of interpersonal relationships (Rahim, 1983). At organizational level (workplace environment), conflicts are attributed to differences or disagreements that refer to attitudes and opinions and views, as well as needs and values, roles and tactics, conflicting interests in a project/task, and also disputes that are caused by rivalry, errors/mistakes or ignorance, and negative behaviors and reactions of organizational stakeholders, as well as absenteeism, excessive complaining, etc. (Saiti, 2015). In more detail, in schools, negative situations that are due to the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of families, students, support staff, principals, and teachers, and which emerge during the fulfillment of preset goals, are the basis of organizational conflicts, according to İnandı, Tunç, and Gündüz (as it is cited in Yaraş & Gündüzalp, 2021: 398).

2. Typology of organizational school conflicts

In terms of their typology, organizational conflicts can be divided into two categories, i.e. interpersonal and team-based, and can also be classified into four separate categories: a. hierarchical conflicts, b. functional conflicts, c. executive conflicts, and d. conflicts between formal and informal organization (Bourantas, 2015; Makrygiannis, 2019). In terms of their effects, two types of conflict can be identified in the context of organizational conflicts, i.e. functional or constructive conflicts, which serve organizational goals and increase organizational efficiency, and dysfunctional or destructive conflicts, which hinder organizational performance (Shahin, 2019: 13). Regarding the capacity of stakeholders involved in school conflicts, it can be reported that conflicts take place among students themselves, and between students and teachers, students and the principal, and the principal and teachers. Furthermore, conflicts also take place among teachers themselves, between the principal and parents/guardians, between teachers and the parents/guardians of students, and between the school itself and other social stakeholders of it, such as local authorities and parents.

3. Causes of organizational school conflicts

Jurban (2017) lists three sources-causes of conflicts: 1. the level of functional independence; stakeholders of an organization who work in different departments have different responsibilities, and this is highly possible to cause conflicts, unless responsibilities are allocated effectively. 2. Differences in values and goals; a major source of conflicts among employees in different departments emerges, when these employees have different goals. 3. Overlapping duties and responsibilities within organizational structure; when there is confusion between the duties and responsibilities of stakeholders. Other key causes of conflicts are the following: a. communication problems; poor relationships among organizational stakeholders and lack of proper briefing can have an adverse effect on mutual understanding between organizational stakeholders, according to Tourish and Hargie (2004), b. role ambiguity; when there is lack of clarity in job roles and requirements, staff experiences a difficult working environment, as an effect, and this can result in unwanted behavior, as it is argued by Mullins (2007), c. conflict of interest; the allocation of limited resources can cause conflict, since each stakeholder can fight for their share, according to Mullins (2004). Actually, according to Kaushal and Kwantes, Schmidt and Tannebaum, and Şimşek and Kingir (as it is cited in in Yaraş & Gündüzalp, 2021: 398), a difference in the anticipated behaviors and goals of stakeholders is believed to be a source of organizational conflicts. Mohamad Johdi and Apitree (2012) list eight key causes of organizational conflicts, i.e. the existence of different goals among employees and different departments within an organization, rivalry to obtain the necessary resources, miscommunication, and misinterpretation of information, as an effect, breathing space, disagreement on performance standards, disagreements on organizational structure, interdependence of projects/tasks, and past unresolved conflicts.

İnandi, Tunç and Gündüz (as it is cited in Yaraş & Gündüzalp, 2021: 398) argue that negative situations arise in schools within the context of organizational conflicts, as a result of the implications of qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the families of students, support staff, principals, and teachers, in an effort to achieve the goals set. In research conducted by Arslan and Polat (as it is cited in Yaraş & Gündüzalp, 2021: 408), it becomes clear that resistance to change, autocracy, formality-obsession with rules, and being either fully positive or negative towards improvements, are causes of conflicts. Göksoy and Argon (2016: 200) report that conflicts in schools are due to various causes, such as lack of communication (which causes indifference/apathy, lack of respect, unfounded criticism, obsessions, and misunderstandings), political/ideological factors (unnecessary complaints, high demands, disappointment, as a result of unfulfilled expectations/wishes, personal ambitions and weaknesses, biases, cultural and economic differences, ignorance, lack of tolerance, and misunderstandings). Göksoy and Argon (2016: 200) also list organizational factors (failure to observe rules, neglect of duty, negative impact of the social environment, student absenteeism, teaching and learning failure, and unfair practices in role allocation). Doğan (2016), on the other hand, lists three key causes of conflicts in schools, according to teachers, i.e. how projects and assignments are carried out, individual differences, and school management. In more detail, when it comes to how projects and assignments are carried out, Doğan lists the following: using the classroom, arriving late in class, and having the duty to supervise students, as well as identifying teaching differences, being involved in social activities, and applying school discipline. In terms of individual differences, Doğan points out trade union activities, political views, cultural differences, a different viewpoint of the educational system, personality structure, and gender. Regarding school management, Doğan lists communication problems, lack of training on management issues, the curriculum, allocation of work, control activities, and lack of support for innovation. Saiti (2015: 584-586) reports two key categories of causes of school conflicts, i.e. personal and organizational. In more specific, when it comes to

Greek schools, and according to research conducted in Greece (Androulakis & Stamatis, 2009; Fassoulis, 2006; Koula, 2011; Paraskevopoulos, 2008; Saitis et al., 1996; Tekos & Iordanidis, 2011; Toziou, 2012, Saiti, 2015: 584), the sources of conflicts are lack of cohesion among teachers due to transfers, lack of effective school management, and hence, the school principal's failure to establish a smooth climate, organizational failures and ineffective communication and information models, limited material, technical, and financial resources, individual differences, and differences in views, attitudes, and beliefs. The sources of conflicts in schools can be summarized in five categories (Fassoulis, 2006; Paraskevopoulos, 2008; Rahim, 2001; Saiti, 2015): a. communication problems, b. role ambiguity, c. goal incompatibility or conflict among the stakeholders of the school community, d. conflict of interest, and e. different values. Mohamad Johdi and Apitree (2012) suggest that the factors that cause school conflicts can be classified into two categories, i.e. structural, and personal. In his research study, Jubran (2017) identifed three general causes of school conflicts: poor relationships between teachers and management, personal problems of teachers that are taken to school, and problems that teachers experience in school. In her research study, Catana (2015) identified seventeen different causes of school conflicts for teachers, which can be classified into three categories: personal factors, organizational issues, and other issues, such as lack of support for innovative processes and procedures, lack of opportunities for personal and professional development, lack of career prospects, lack of a stable regulatory framework, informal team building, and marginalization of individuals. In a research study conducted by Johdi and Apitree (2012), they report that, according to the views of principals, the main cause of conflicts is lack of clear duties, while they believe that major causes are the different views of stakeholders of the school unit, and/or poor quality of communication. In the same research study, according to teachers, the main cause of school conflicts is the different views of stakeholders, followed by lack of clear duties and responsibilities, and a different working style. In his survey, Nikolaou (2019) found out that the main causes of school conflicts are four, i.e. lack of cooperation, conflicting teaching goals, miscommunication/misinterpretation of information, and failures in managing and running the school.

When it comes to the situation in schools in Greece, there have been strong school conflicts lately, due to two major causes. In specific, one cause is the economic crisis that has taken place in recent years, which has resulted in school budgeting/funding cuts, and the other cause refers to centralized funding and a bureaucratic framework that prevent the utilization of other sources of financial support (Saiti, 2015: 603).

4. Implications of organizational school conflicts

The correlation of organizational conflict and productivity is a very delicate matter. Generally speaking, the field of organizational conflicts needs extensive investigation (Shahin, 2019: 12). According to the classical view, organizational conflict is believed to be negative for an organization, due to the negative impact on the latter's operation. By contrast, according to contemporary management views, the presence of conflict is a positive indicator of organizational performance, and leads to better decision-making, stronger development, and higher efficiency (Saiti, 2015). Robbins (1974), and Manesis, Vlachou, & Mitropoulou (2019: 781) express three views to interpret the phenomenon of conflicts. According to the traditional view, conflict is negative, and should be avoided, while it is also believed to be the result of organizational dysfunction. From the point of view of human relationships, conflicts are believed to be a normal and inevitable situation, which may sometimes have positive effects. According to the interactive view, not only is conflict believed to be positive, but also an essential ingredient of a high-performing team. According to modern views, a conflict-free organization or team is highly

possible to become static and not correspond to new conditions, also characterized by lack of flexibility and adaptability. In other words, a minimum level of conflict can have benefits for organizations, because, in this way, a certain level of creativity and rivalry can be maintained among individuals. Organizational conflicts should not only be seen in a negative light, because they also have many positive characteristics, such as encouraging creativity, problem solving, and overcoming hurdles among employees. As it is highlighted by Iannacone (2017), organizations and individuals should learn to manage potential conflicts effectively, in order to get successful results. There is a steep rise in conflicts, when there is interaction, complexity, unclear boundaries, and lengthy projects/tasks. Highlighting that conflicts are a normal situation in organizational structures, Folger, Poole, and Stutman (as it is cited in Yaraş & Gündüzalp, 2021: 408) believe that it is important to evaluate the positive and negative implications of conflicts.

4.1. Negative implications

Organizational conflicts may have negative implications. For example, they can cause stress, which reduces job performance. Moreover, they pose hurdles in decision-making within an organization. It is like compromising safety. They have negative implications on goal achievement by conflicting stakeholders. Conflicts can be a major dysfunction, causing burnout, and lack of satisfaction, and degrading the quality of communication among teams and individuals, and trust in relationships, also reducing commitment levels, and increasing resistance to change.

Teachers in the survey of Göksoy & Argon (2016), who described conflicts as negative situations, placed an emphasis on the following negative implications: setting up subgroups with similar views; tension, lack of compromise, a sense of shock, feelings of insignificance, distress, disappointment, psychological apathy, communication gap, ideological conflicts, and biases. Most teachers in the above survey view conflicts as phenomena that prevent the realization of the school's goals, and are also bad for students themselves. In research conducted on Greek schools (Paraskevopoulos, 2008; Saitis et al., 1996; Saiti, 2015; Tekos & Iordanidis, 2011), it was discovered that conflicts among teachers in schools have a negative impact on the school's effectiveness. According to the survey of Catana (2015), unless conflicts are resolved properly, they will affect the quality of the learning environment negatively. Especially in cases where conflicts are underplayed by teachers and principals, in an effort to keep them secret, their implications are almost always negative. In any case, conflicts due to difference in values, along with other reasons, can cause teachers to leave their profession, as it is pointed out by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2016). Göksoy and Argon (2016) highlight the fact that conflicts can cause teachers to underperform and have low morale, and can also cause polarization among subgroups. The findings of Thapa (2014) and Shahmohammadi (2014) point out that teachers experience conflicts as lack of creativity among them, as well as lack of motivation, commitment, and respect for their profession, thus triggering the adoption of an individual culture in their approach. In the survey conducted by Manesis, Vlachou, and Mitropoulou (2019) on Greek schools, teachers believe that conflicts cause anger, tension, distress, disappointment, lack of trust, low morale, lack of cooperation and communication, and low cohesion among teachers, also distracting them from their teaching duties. What is more, the survey of Choi and Lee (2010) identified negative effects of conflicts on the organizational effectiveness of schools. According to Omisore and Abiodun (2014), organizational conflicts may also cause serious problems to the psychology, health, and behavior of employees in their personal life, such as high stress levels, and also cause employees to become distant, withdraw into themselves, smoke more, eat more, and suffer from high blood pressure and headache problems. In the survey of Patsali and Papoutsaki (2014), school principals reported that it is highly possible for conflicts to upset interpersonal relationships among stakeholders of the school unit, affect negatively the willingness

of those stakeholders to work together and act as a team, as well as increase the occupational stress of teachers, and have a significant diminishing effect on their productivity. In the survey of Cain and du Plessis (2013), both teachers and principals reported that it is highly possible for school conflicts to have a negative impact on the performance and behavior of students. Furthermore, De Vliert and De Vliert (1997), as well as Tjosvald et al. (2001), report that conflicts prevent the establishment of a positive climate in school, as a result of poor communication, suspicion, and rivalry. Therefore, it is natural for conflicting stakeholders to resist any well-intentioned activity, and this results in low morale, and the belief that any new effort made by anyone is worthless. The adverse effects of conflicts include difficulties in communication, mistrust, suspicion, negativism, dysfunction due to lack of cooperation, low morale due to a sense of defeat, and moving away from the common goal. Moreover, they can cause emotional disorders, fear, animosity, and finally, opposite goal-setting (Iordanidis, 2014; Saitis, 2007a), psychological fatigue, indifference, and high job stress (Athanasoula-Reppa, 2008; Filippou, 2016). Besides, conflicts can reduce the school's productivity, since precious time and energy are wasted in dealing with them (Nikolaou, 2019: 22-23). In her survey, Argyropoulou (2018) lists a number of negative implications, such as preventing the achievement of the school's goals, lack of team cohesion, decision-making difficulty, and higher occupational stress and burnout. Greenberg and Baron (2013) highlight various negative implications, such as excessive complaining, dissatisfaction, compromising cohesion, and lower effectiveness of the teaching work. Further to that, in their survey, Robbins and Judge (2012) list a wide range of negative implications, including suspicion, lower team morale, miscommunication, and lack of cooperation. In the survey of Nikolaou (2019), it was found out that carrying out the task of managing and running the school is affected negatively, and a negative climate is established in school, combined with the low morale of teachers, and increased job stress, thus reducing the effectiveness of teaching work carried out at school. In their research on school conflicts, Papageorgakis, Papadatou, Prokopiadou, and Saitis (2016) found out that the overwhelming majority of teachers and principals believe that school conflicts have a negative impact on the smooth operation of the school.

4.2. Positive implications

According to the interactive theory, not only is conflict believed to be positive, but it is also an essential component of optimum team performance (Manesis, Vlachou, & Mitropoulou, 2019: 781). Organizational conflict is an opportunity for introducing productive change. What is more, if organizational conflict situations are characterized by moderate tension, they can have positive implications, and are thus believed to be functional (Zavlanos, 2002). Rahim (2011) argues that conflicts can be functional, by triggering innovation, creativity, and change, and improving decision-making, and thus encouraging individuals and/or teams to seek new approaches. According to Serfi (2008), conflicts can boost motivation to embrace change within an organization. According to Shahin (2019), organizational conflict is an opportunity for introducing productive change. According to the same researcher, a certain level of conflict is actually beneficial to organizations, because, in this way, a constant level of creativity and healthy competition can be maintained among individuals. He also points out that a positive approach to individuals and principals during conflicts can make conflicts beneficial to the organization. Therefore, according to Gürüz and Gürel (as it is cited in Yaraş & Gündüzalp, 2021: 398), if organizational stakeholders manage to resolve and address conflicts successfully, they may be able to reap positive results. Omisore and Abiodun (2014) believe that organizational conflicts can trigger the stakeholders' interest in managing them, in order for those stakeholders to be able to improve their communication skills considerably, as well as their readiness to respond to a crisis, and also enhance their creativity, and learn to respect the different views of their colleagues. Moreover,

Omisore and Abiodun argue that it is possible to improve the levels of trust and cooperation among stakeholders who are involved in conflict management, and this can contribute to building stable interpersonal relationships that are founded on team spirit and support. Besides, according to Awan and Anjum (2015), the involvement in conflict management boosts job satisfaction and contributes to higher performance and efficiency, as well as increasing the stakeholders' willingness to stay in their job. On top of that, according to Henry (2008), the involvement in organizational conflicts can lead to better joint decision-making. In the context of positive implications, Everard and Morris (1999: 119) point out that the efficient management of conflicts boosts motivation and morale, while it also promotes personal and organizational development. During a crisis, team members sacrifice their own interest to serve the common good, thus showing more tolerance, cohesion, acceptance, and commitment to decisions made by the leadership (authoritarian leadership), since they acknowledge them to be more direct and necessary. Greenberg and Baron (2013) report that conflict can also be useful for the implementation of change, and offers the opportunity to team members to develop as persons, express their opinions and arguments, and also improve their interpersonal relationships. In the same wavelength, in the survey of Robbins & Judge (2012), positive implications of conflicts were identified, in the form of internal cohesion and unity, increased interest and creativity as a result of healthy selfishness, also identifying long-standing problems and resolving them, providing a more comprehensive explanation of choices made by individuals and teams, and finally, generating better ideas and making better decisions, and implementing them.

The ability of school principals to have a vision that should not overlook the ability to turn around crises that emerge during conflicts, in order to benefit the organization, can be improved with further training (Yaraş & Gündüzalp, 2021). In the survey of Göksoy and Argon (2016), teachers also reported positive implications of conflicts on a personal, social, and organizational level. On a personal level, school conflicts contribute to learning good behavior, realizing mistakes, identifying different ideas, considering events from multiple points of view, developing new ideas and methods, finding the truth, and taking a more relaxed approach. On a social level, school conflicts contribute to improving communication among staff, as well as gaining a better understanding of and respecting the views of others, reaching a consensus approach, and using persuasion. Positive organizational results include identifying problems and solving them, supporting healthy competition towards the development of new and different solutions, establishing a democratic environment, enriching views, and reaching a commonly accepted solution. In fact, conflicts are constructive situations that can improve the quality of decisions made by staff, as well as motivate individuals to become creative and innovative, and trigger their interest and curiosity, help in revealing problems, and apply self-criticism and making choices for changes to be implemented, when anger and tension allow them to freely express themselves. In this way, there is a boost in the performance of both individuals and teams. Actually, according to contemporary management views, the presence of conflict is a positive indicator of organizational performance, and results in better decision-making, development, and efficiency (Saiti, 2015). In the survey of Manesis, Vlachou, and Mitropoulou (2019), teachers listed several positive implications of conflicts, such as identifying existing problems and the causes of conflict, supporting creativity, innovation, and change, motivating individuals, preventing more serious conflict, strengthening communication and interpersonal relationships, reducing negative feelings, and facilitating better decision-making. In the survey of Patsali and Papoutsaki (2014), most principals believe that the occurrence and management of conflicts can have positive implications on the operation of school units. More specifically, they reported the search for optimum solutions, improvement of relationships among school stakeholders, stronger cooperation, personal development by promoting thinking and

relevant skills, commitment of stakeholders to the school, and reallocation of available resources. In their survey on school conflicts, Papageorgakis, Papadatou, Prokopiadou, and Saitis (2016) discovered that positive dimensions of these conflicts can also be identified (finding the real causes of conflicts, developing innovative ideas, releasing emotions, efficient communication, building a personal understanding and acquiring skills, establishing cooperation, and strengthening relationships among teachers). In her research, Argyropoulou (2018) reported positive implications, in the form of staff empathy, higher productivity because of competition, and better decision-making, along with the introduction of change and innovation and their contribution to finding alternatives. The results of qualitative research conducted by De Dreu (2008) on the positive impact of conflicts on social organizations, such as schools, showed that conflicts facilitate learning, and enhance the effectiveness and innovation of teaching stakeholders. However, it is necessary to make the following assumptions: a. those involved in conflict should trust each other, and through their cooperation, they should attempt to contribute to the achievement of the overall goals of the organization, and b. conflict should be resolved through constructive negotiation and by seeking a commonly accepted optimum solution. The findings of research by Nikolaou (2019) showed that the positive implications of conflict are the following: higher team cohesion, better problem solving, seeking recommended solutions, improving the quality of interpersonal relationships, better decision-making, and better acceptance of the principal as a leader. These results are not newly discovered, since, according to the modern management approach, the view is adopted, according to which, conflicts can have a positive contribution to organizations, such as by identifying problems, facilitating better decision-making, strengthening relationships, etc. (Bourantas, 2002; Rahim, 2011; Robbins & Judge, 2012; Saiti, 2014). Schermerhorn (2012: 502) argues that "similarly to stress, conflicts can also contribute to raising creativity and performance". As a matter of fact, through the effective management of conflicts, it is possible to boost the creativity and productivity of an organization, due to the higher level of involvement of individuals in the processes and procedures and activities of the organization in question (De Dreu & De Vliert,1997; Tjosvald et al., 2001).

5. Conclusions

As it has already been mentioned, the modern management approach posits that contrasts/conflicts can have a positive contribution, in terms of motivating people to put more effort, and ensure a more efficient operation of the organization (Bourantas, 2002; Saitis, 2007[a]). This context refers to the adoption of a multifaceted approach, evaluation of and response to any problems that may arise, and engaging in constructive debate, in order to find optimum solutions (Athanasoula-Reppa, 2012; Filippou, 2016). Therefore, it is not surprising that better ideas can be generated, as a result of justifying the choices or actions of individuals or teams. Besides, underlying problems can be identified and addressed. Furthermore, external conflict can strengthen the internal unity of teachers. As a natural consequence, democratic procedures and collectivism are built. At the same time, everyone understands their own limits, and resets their personal goals, based on the collective goal. Similarly, conflict is useful in implementing changes, and providing opportunities to team members, so that the latter can express their views and arguments, and improve their interpersonal relationships (Iordanidis, 2014). Besides, it enhances cohesion within a team, and commitment of team members. Finally, and also in terms of running and managing a school unit, it may improve the quality of decisions made (Athanasoula-Reppa, 2012; Bourantas, 2002, and contribute to its strategic planning and efficiency (Filippou, 2016). Rahim (2001: 12) argues that "it is impossible to eliminate conflicts in organizations, whereas, on the other hand, in the long run, eliminating conflict could affect teamwork, individuals, and productivity". Although this makes sense, it can only happen when school conflicts are treated as "a common problem that needs to be collectively addressed and resolved", according to Tjosvold et al. (2000). In this way, the positive impact of

conflict - such as generating more creative ideas, easing off tension, or clarifying goals, as problems surface - may be noticed. Therefore, it is actually possible to increase the efficiency of a team (Saiti, 2015).

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