

## **The role of bilingual education in school improvement: findings from Wix Primary School/École de Wix in London**

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### **Abstract**

A London school was the first to implement a bilingual two-way immersion (TWI) stream in England in 2006. This school was in difficulties in the past, and seemed that the TWI stream contributed to school improvement. International research has shown that bilingual TWI education can have linguistic and social benefits. However, there has not been any study examining to what extent it may also have school-improvement potential. Hence, the findings presented in this article address the question: Can the implementation of a bilingual stream turn around a struggling school? Theories of school effectiveness and TWI literature provide the theoretical framework, and a mixed method research design (interviews, children's letters and questionnaires) was adopted to generate data. These were analysed largely qualitatively through thematic analysis with some descriptive statistics based on quantitative approaches. The main findings are that the TWI stream helped the school improve their reputation, gain pioneer bilingual education status and act as a mediator for internal social cohesion. However, these benefits appeared to flourish – not as an isolated intervention – but in the framework of a wider long-term holistic vision towards school innovation and a caring learning environment for all.

### **Sommaire**

Une école de Londres était la première pour mettre en application une filière bilingue immersion réciproque (TWI) en Angleterre en 2006. Cette école était en difficultés dans le passé, et il semblait que la filière TWI a contribué à l'amélioration d'école. Les recherches internationales ont prouvé que l'éducation TWI peut avoir les prestations linguistiques et sociales. Cependant, il-y-avait pas d'études examinant dans quelle mesure elle peut également avoir le potentiel pour améliorer une école. Par conséquent, les résultats présentés dans cette d'article adresse la question : L'exécution d'une filière bilingue peut-elle sauver une école en difficultés ? Les théories d'efficacité scolaire et la littérature de TWI fournissent le cadre théorique, et un protocole méthodique mélangé de méthode (entrevues, lettres des enfants et questionnaires) a été adopté pour produire des données. Celles-ci ont été analysées en grande partie qualitativement par l'analyse thématique avec quelques statistiques descriptives basées sur des approches quantitatives. Les résultats principaux sont que filière TWI a clairement aidé l'école à améliorer leur réputation, statut pionnier d'éducation bilingue et à agir en tant que médiateur pour la cohésion sociale interne. Cependant, ces avantages ont

semblé s'épanouir - pas comme intervention d'isolement - mais dans le cadre d'une vision holistique à long terme vers l'innovation scolaire et d'un environnement supportant pour tous.

## **1 Introduction**

International research has shown that bilingual TWI education can have linguistic and social benefits. However, there have been hardly any studies examining to what extent it may also have school-improvement potential (see Burger et al 2011 for an exception). This article addresses this gap by presenting a case study<sup>1</sup> with this focus.

Wix Primary School has been reported as a school that turned from a 'sink' school into a good community school, and this has been attributed to the bilingual stream by school staff. According to the head teacher, this innovation has led to very positive developments in the whole school and not just in the bilingual stream. This led to the question: Can the implementation of a bilingual stream turn a struggling school around?

The bilingual stream at Wix is of the two-way immersion (TWI) type (Baker 2006). This model brings children from two different linguistic groups together in one classroom and teaches them in two languages. As a result, all children learn two languages from and with one another. Besides historically bilingual areas, such as Wales (UK) or Friesland (NL), there have been a number of cities in Europe that have implemented TWI projects, based on locally spoken languages that migrants have brought with them in recent decades. Wix is the first TWI model in England, combining English with a language locally spoken by many families: French. This has been done in collaboration with the Lyée Français in London, as is described below.

In this article, I will describe the school context in section 2. This will outline the unusual situation of two national school systems working together on one site, running a joint TWI stream. In section 3, the theoretical background will be presented, based on school effectiveness and two-way immersion literature. The indicators established in this section will provide a conceptual framework that helps examine to what extent Wix is considered a good or effective school and what role the TWI stream may have played in school improvement. The research design will be described in section 4, namely the data collection instruments and the thematic approach employed for analysis of the interviews and open-reponse data from staff, parents and children. In section 5, the samples will be described and findings presented relating to the school effectiveness indicators established.

## **2 Context**

This section describes the case study and embeds this in the wider context of bilingual education in the UK, and more specifically England.

### **2.1 The Wix case study**

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<sup>1</sup> Research project funded by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation 2011-2012.

Wix consists of two schools and three streams that share one building. The two schools will be referred to as Wix Primary School (WPS) and École de Wix (EdW); the streams will be referred to as the bilingual stream, the English classic stream and the French classic stream. The whole school will be referred to as Wix.

WPS is a state-run primary school in London (330 pupils, incl. reception and nursery). It is located north of Clapham Common and administrated by the Borough of Wandsworth. The school is located in a historic school building built for this purpose in 1902. It has a diverse intake socially, ethnically and linguistically, reflecting the local population. The families who send their children to WPS are partly from population groups with low socio-economic status, which is evident by the proportion of children on Free School Meals<sup>2</sup>. In the English Classic stream, this proportion used to be above 50% in 2004 and had been reduced to 33% by the time the 2010 cohort started primary school. The national average of children entitled to Free School Meals was 18.5% in 2009 (DfE 2010). Thus, the rate was still above average. In the past, before the current head teacher took over the headship in 2004, the school was struggling and enrolment numbers had been decreasing.

EdW (270 pupils) is one of four primary feeder schools for the Lycée Charles de Gaulle, a secondary school (11-18 years old) in London<sup>3</sup>. The Lycée is an international school, which provides a French education for expatriate or migrant French families in London. It accommodates about 4000 students who study for their French Baccalaureate. Given that parents pay fees for EdW and the Lycée, it self-selects families that are relatively well-off and who are ready to invest, at least financially, in their children's education. EdW has leased space in the premises of WPS since 1993, and has adopted the name École de Wix. According to the school management, it has waiting lists and seems to have enjoyed a good reputation also in the past.

In 2006, a bilingual two-way immersion stream was implemented in cooperation between the two schools. Each year, 14 French-registered and 14 English-registered children start school together in a TWI class. Half the week they are taught the English curriculum by an English teacher, and the other half of the week they are taught the French curriculum by a French teacher. At the time of the survey there were 112 pupils in the TWI stream (year 1-4), which will reach its maximum in 2013 with 168 children. There are plans to introduce TWI provisions also at foundation stage (nursery/reception).

The pupils for the bilingual stream are selected partly by the local authority, based on parental interest, on the sibling rule and by proximity to the school, and partly by the Lycée based on a French connection, (heritage, parent etc). Given one school charges fees and the other does not creates the unique situation that half of a class pays for their education whereas the other half does not. Providing TWI education through a state-private partnership however,

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<sup>2</sup> Available to children from families with a combined household income of less than £16,000 p.a.

<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to describe the whole student body, since the French school does not collect any data on children's ethnic, linguistic or religious backgrounds, since this would be against the French ideology of 'égalité'. Home language was included in the data collection with children. This will be reported under findings.

is an international novelty as far as I am aware. Thus, the practice in Wix may pave the way for new possibilities for future partnerships between international schools and local state schools, and for further TWI educational provision in the UK.

## 2.2 Bilingual education in the UK with a focus on England

The UK population is multilingual (see e.g. (Baker & Eversley, 2000; European Commission, 2006) . In Wales, Scotland, Cornwall and Northern Ireland, which are historically bilingual, the Celtic languages have undergone recent revivals and promotion to varied degrees, which includes the provision of some bilingual education (see e.g. (Edwards, 2004; Wright, 2000, 2004). However, this article focuses on England, which has been constructed as an officially monolingual region, based on the one-nation one-language doctrine (Wright, 2004). Wix forms part of a growing number of schools in England that challenge what Gogolin (1994) coined the “monolingual habitus in multilingual schools”, and offer bilingual education.

In England, there is an increasing number of one-way immersion (OWI) or content and language integrated learning (CLIL) programmes: Back in 2002, the National Centre for Languages (CILT) survey counted 47 CLIL or OWI project. In the same year, the then Department for Education and School (DfES) commissioned a Content and Language Integrated Project (CLIP), based on eight secondary schools. In 2011, the UK Coalition Government initiated another pilot project, which selected 1 primary and 4 secondary schools to further trial and evaluate bilingual immersion education in England. This is still on-going. For a directory of current bilingual projects see BIEN 2012.

Based on the Wix model, one more school started an English-French bilingual stream in 2010, also in conjunction with the French Lycée. This is a collaboration between Holycross Primary and Ecole Marie Orliac. Others are hoping to set up some kind of bilingual streams or schools, combining English with Spanish, French, German and Russian. However, since state schools are not allowed to select or discriminate students on the basis of language, these projects are unlikely to comply with Baker’s (2006) definition of TWI. The reason for this is that schools are unlikely to recruit balanced numbers of speakers of both languages. While they cannot predict the linguistic backgrounds of the students in their classrooms, since they can vary with each cohort. I termed this flexible immersion (see BIEN 2012), which needs to accommodate varied proportions of language backgrounds in one class. Much research is required into how bilingual education can meaningfully be delivered in these contexts.

The increased interest in bilingual education more generally, gave rise to a conference organised by Wandsworth Council and University of Exeter in March 2012 (Meier 2012), and the launch of the Bilingual Immersion Education Network (BIEN), which aims to consolidate the rather disjointed developments in England and beyond. A European Network of bilingual education models would be a useful resource for existing and prospective bilingual programmes.

### 3 Theoretical background

In this section, I will first establish school effectiveness indicators, before I present the gap in TWI research addressed by this study.

#### 3.1 School effectiveness indicators

School effectiveness and improvement research has started in the late 1970s (Hopkins and Reynolds 2001), and there have been a number of reviews (e.g. Leithwood et al. 1999, Pritchett Johnson 2000, Teddlie and Reynolds 2000, Hargreaves 2001, West and Ainscow 2006). Relevant indicators, factors and concepts have been identified, which have at times been discussed controversially (e.g. Thrupp 2001, Teddlie and Reynolds 2000). Many of them agree, however, that factors related to school effectiveness are quality teaching, school climate, relationships, innovation and change. Hurrelmann (2005) and Pritchett Johnson et al. (2000) also discuss these factors and provide useful starting points to identify school effectiveness indicators. In Table 1, I provide an overview of these indicators, organised into categories or domains. This will also act as a framework for analysis.

Table 1: School-effectiveness indicators

Domains	Indicators
1) School-internal communication and relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social and communicative experiences</li> <li>• A cooperative culture and relationship structures</li> </ul>
2) School-external communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two-way communication between school and parents</li> <li>• Meaningful links and partnerships with the local community</li> </ul>
3) Openness to innovation and change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a climate within their schools where students and teachers can take risks</li> <li>• readiness to change</li> <li>• readiness to restructure the way schools operate</li> <li>• readiness to rethink goals and priorities</li> <li>• To retain strong, instructional leadership capable of developing a shared vision of educational excellence</li> <li>• Consult school effectiveness literature</li> <li>• plan strategically for the future</li> <li>• To make wise use of technology and resources</li> </ul>
4) Ethos of high expectations, caring and respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To encourage an ethic of caring and sense of community</li> <li>• High expectations of all teachers and children</li> <li>• Model good learning behaviour</li> <li>• Respect towards all children, teachers and parents</li> </ul>

Hurrelmann (2005) and Pritchett Johnson et al. (2000) , both emphasise the importance of social relationships, cooperative behaviour and communication in general, and Hurrelmann (2005) stresses the importance of teacher cooperation since this affects achievement and school climate (domain 1). Both authors show further that a good school-home relationship is important in a successful education. West (2005) argues that external relations, especially school-to-school collaboration, may also benefit schools and lead to improvement (domain

2). This domain is discussed further in the next section. Pritchard Johnson et al. (2000) found that effective schools are open to innovation and continuing development and improvement (domain 3), and that the overall expectations of academic achievement, a caring environment and respectful behaviour (domain 4) are further key dimensions associated with an effective school. Table 1 will act as a framework for analysis.

School effectiveness research also harbours challenges: Coe (2009) warns from establishing causal relationships between certain factors or specific interventions and school improvement, since no-one can say with certainty whether the improvement would have come about with or without the intervention that was investigated. Thus, I bore this in mind when interpreting the findings.

### **3.2 TWI research**

This section summarises benefits and challenges associated with TWI education.

**Linguistic and academic:** Reich and Roth (2002:24,41) came to the conclusion that TWI programmes “are superior to all other bilingual models” in terms of school-based second language acquisition. All children develop bilingualism and biliteracy, while they generally still achieve at least the same attainment level as children in mainstream monolingual programmes (Söhn 2005, Baker 2006, Cummins 1996). Indeed, research reviews reveal that children with migrant backgrounds maintain and develop their first language, and children with a majority-language background learn another second language to varying levels (Collier & Thomas, 1997, 2004; Genesee & Gándara, 1999; Greene, 1998; Willig, 1985). Thus, researchers largely agree that relatively high language proficiency can be achieved in two languages without any negative effects on other subjects. Furthermore, meta-linguistic and social-interaction based language learning strategies are also associated with TWI (Angelova, Gunawardena, & Volk, 2006; Lantolf & Poehner, 2008), pointing out that TWI students can acquire bilingual language competencies and language learning competencies.

**Social:** Research from the USA (Hornberger 1991, Freeman 1998, Lindholm-Leary 2001), from Israel/Palestine (Bekerman and Horenczyk 2004) and Germany (Meier 2009, 2010, 2012) established that TWI education is associated with positive social outcomes, especially group cohesion. Research from the German-Italian programme in Wolfsburg (Sandfuchs & Zumhasch, 2005) found that TWI education was associated with a good class climate. TWI has even been recognised as a peace building instrument in areas of conflict, for instance in Israel/Palestine (Bekerman and Horenczyk 2004, Feuerverger 2001) and Macedonia (Tankersley 2001). Furthermore, Bekerman and Horenczyk’s (2004) observation that TWI students have good conflict resolution skills was also confirmed by Meier’s (2010) quasi-experimental study in Berlin. Thus, these studies indicate that social cohesion and conflict resolution skills may well be associated with TWI models. Moreover, some authors argue that TWI models can be associated with social change (Freeman, 1998), alternative identity constructions (Palmer 2008) and developing critical (multilingual) discourses (Hornberger, 2003).

School improvement: There is little research in terms of school improvement and TWI. One study, I am aware of is by Burger et al. (2011), who evaluated a post-secondary programme. Their macro analysis showed that the immersion programme was able to recruit high-achieving students from across Canada. It is presented as a model for other programmes at this level. The context of this study, namely a Canadian post-secondary immersion model, differs a great deal from an inner-city London primary school context. Thus, these two studies may lay the foundations of TWI school evaluation research.

**Challenges:** TWI may recognise two languages, but most school contexts are multilingual rather than just bilingual. This means that other languages that children bring to school are often not recognised (Meier 2010). There is often a status difference between the two languages, which can lead to inequality in language use and power associated with groups (Bekerman and Horenczyk 2004, Genesee and Gandara 1999). When it comes to social interaction, studies have shown that in unstructured times, such as in breaks, students tend to group with speakers of the same language (Freeman 1998, Lindholm-Leary 2001). This means that there may be a limit to social integration between the linguistic groups. In some contexts, it is difficult to recruit even numbers of speakers of both languages (Meier 2010). A further challenge is that most TWI projects are limited to primary school (Howard and Christian 2003), thus it poses the question of how to maintain bilingualism beyond this stage. A notable exception is the Berlin<sup>4</sup> model that offers TWI education from school entry to university access. Assessment and qualifications can be problematic, since in contexts, such as England, the TWI programme operates within a monolingual system of school inspections that has no structures to recognise bi- or monolingual achievements (Meier, 2012). Research stresses that parents involvement in their children's academic work is related to achievement. This seems to be the case more or less consistently in TWI (e.g. (Gräfe-Bentzien, 2001; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; May, 2003) and less consistently in mainstream education (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Patall, Cooper, & Civey Robinson, 2008). On the one hand it could be argued that parents who choose to enrol their children in a bilingual stream may be a self-selected group who may take an active interest in their children's schooling. On the other hand, in TWI models one teacher speaks the language of the parents, which may well be a factor that helps bridge the gap between home and school cultures, which can have important positive effects (Hummrich & Wiezorek, 2005; Hurrelmann, 2005; Torres-Guzmán, 2002). Thus more research is needed to examine this link. Furthermore it is agreed that TWI education cannot act as a panacea to resolve all problems that children with diverse backgrounds may have (Cummins, 2001; Rösch, 2001; Söhn, 2005).

**Gap:** In the above, it has been established that there are a range of potential linguistic and social benefits as well as challenges associated with a well-implemented TWI model. As mentioned in the introduction, it seems that in the case of Wix, the implementation of the bilingual stream may have contributed to school improvement. There has not yet been any research into the role of TWI in terms of primary school effectiveness or improvement. Thus, this is the focus of the case study presented here.

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<sup>4</sup> Staatliche Europa-Schule Berlin (see Meier 2010), and Carte Blanche in this issue.

## 4 Methods

The study was conducted in English and French and sometimes bilingually, based on the fact that I collected data in both schools and all three streams. Thus, all research instruments were available in English and French. I adopted Greene's (2007:14) philosophy of mixing methods, which means using different techniques and methods and enable a dialogue among them. Thus, I combined a children's writing activity (quantitative and qualitative), with a staff and parent questionnaire (quantitative and qualitative) and with staff and children's interviews (qualitative). The instruments had the aim of evaluating Wix, the cooperation and the bilingual stream as well as, charting changes and their reasons.

### 4.1 Children's writing activity (letter to Sam)

I conducted an activity with all children in year 3 and 4 (CE1 and CE2), which lead to the children writing a letter to a hypothetical child (Sam) who is thinking about coming to Wix. I prepared a letter for the children in English and French, and they were asked to provide an adjective for the school, and say why they think 'Sam' should come to Wix, and why perhaps not (letter to Sam). Additionally they were asked to indicate their favourite place in school and reasons for this. This resulted in 158 letters, from two classes in each of the three streams: 97.5% of all children enrolled in these classes completed the letter (see Table 2).

Table 2: Letter to Sam, return rates

Year	Letters to Sam	TWI	Classic English	Classic French	Total
3 (CE1)	Completed	27	23	29	79
	Missing	1	1	1	3
	Return rate	96.4%	95.8%	96.7%	96.3%
4 (CE2)	Completed	28	22	29	79
	Missing		1		1
	Return rate	100%	95.7%	100%	98.8%
Total	Completed	55	45	58	158
	Missing	1	2	1	4
	Return rate	98.2%	95.7	98.3%	97.5%

### 4.2 Interviews

First, I will explain the recruitment of interviewees in the school before I will describe the interview questions and process.

I recruited 27 adult participants, namely teachers, management, support staff and parent representatives (Table 3). This was a stratified sample, insofar as participants were selected to represent all streams, both schools, and different functions. Teachers and support staff were recruited primarily based on the fact that they worked with year 3 and 4. Additional staff were invited for an interview either because they had been at the school for a long time and have experienced the changes I was interested in, or because they were available for interview during their busy schedule.



After the letter writing activity the children, I asked the children if they were interested in having a chat about their school. Names were collected on pieces of paper, from which 24 were randomly chosen. One child did not bring a signed parental consent, and could thus not be interviewed. I conducted 10 paired interviews and three 1-to-1 interviews with 23 children (Table 3).

Table 3: Interviews conducted

	WPS and EdW	English Classic	French Classic	TWI	Total
Management	4				4
Teacher		3	2	6	11
Support staff	3	4	2	2	1
Pupils*		3	4	5	12
Parent reps			1	1	2
Total	7	10	9	14	40

\*10 of these were paired interviews

For the interviews with adults I adopted a semi-structured approach. I showed the participants interview cards (in English or French) that allowed us to explore main themes, sub-themes and new themes rather than ask and answer questions. Figure 1 provides an example of the card which was used to examine part of the research question posed in the present article. This is one card among nine, each of which explored a different main theme<sup>5</sup>. This was a useful guide and allowed the participants to choose topics in which they were more interested. Some participants followed it more closely, others used it as a loose guide to exploring issues important to them.

Figure 1: Interview cards used with Wix staff

3 outcomes or cooperation/change	3 Les résultats de la collaboration/ des changements
reputation school/climate community language parental interest academic Learning children's well-being <b>Wix/Lycée cooperation</b>	réputation climat de l'école communauté langue intérêt parental apprendre le bien-être des enfants <b>coopération Wix/Lycée</b>

The interviews with children were open, and I had no schedule since I wanted to avoid asking leading questions or prescribing themes. The conversations were loosely based around their favourite places in school indicated in the letters to Sam, to enable them to talk about the school and the people in it. In some instances, the children told me interesting stories about their school experiences and their relationships, but some conversations were incoherent and

<sup>5</sup> Wix; function of school; change; interaction between adults; interaction between children; organisation of the bilingual stream; different streams; implementation of the bilingual stream; learning from Wix

I was not able to elicit much useful data from the children. Thus, more interviews should have been conducted to generate a richer body of data.

All interviews were conducted on Wix premises in empty classrooms, during class time. Those with adults lasted between 30 and 90 minutes, and those with children between 15-30 minutes. They were conducted in English, French or bilingually, depending on the participants preferences and language use.

### 4.3 Questionnaires

Questionnaires (in English on one side and French on the other) were sent home to all parents who had children at WPS or EdW in May 2011. During the collection phase, I stood regularly at the school gate with a box, reminding parents to return their questionnaires and answering questions where necessary. The return rate was relatively good in the bilingual stream (WPS 44.9%/EdW 32.9%), but less so in the French Classic (21.7%) and in the English Classic stream (17.9%). Clearly, I should have offered the questionnaire in more languages, since the Classic parent group represents the multilingual population of South London. The inability to read and write English or French may be one of the reasons for the low return rate in this group. Verbal administration with a multilingual team might have yielded a better result. This means that the voices of the Classic parents are under-represented in this study, and more research would be needed in order to use the data for statistical analyses or to draw any meaningful conclusions.

Table 4: Parent population and return rate

	TWI WPS	TWI EdW	Classic English	Classic French	Unclear	Total
Parent addresses held by school administration	69	68	195	253		585
Parent questionnaires returned	31	22	25	55	3	146
Return rate	44.9%	32.4%	17.9%	21.7%		25.0%

Through staff meetings, I informed the employees that they will receive a questionnaire relating to my research. The questionnaires were then distributed by school administrators to all 61 members of staff who were employed by WPS or EdW. As can be seen from Table 5, the return rate in EdW was relatively good (70%), but less good on the WPS side (42%)<sup>6</sup>. In sum, the staff questionnaires are a useful data source but due to the small, and in the case of WPS limited, number do not allow statistical analyses beyond descriptions.

Table 5: Staff population and return rate

	TWI WPS	English Classic	TWI EdW	French Classic	Total

<sup>6</sup> The questionnaires were distributed through staff pigeon holes. After the data collection, I heard a teaching assistant say that she had worked in WPS for about two years, but she did not know she had a pigeon hole. This could explain the lower return rate on the WPS side.

Staff employed by school	31		30		61
Staff questionnaires returned	4	9	4	17	34
Return rate	41.9%		70.0%		55.7%

#### 4.4 Analysis

For the data analysis, I used the four school effectiveness indicators (Table 1) and examined in which areas Wix has worked towards being an effective school and what role the bilingual stream played in this.

The quantitative data were entered in SPSS and analysed descriptively using frequency counts and cross-tables. The open questions (letter to Sam and questionnaires) and the interview data were recorded, transcribed and coded, using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006), with the help of NVivo. The codes analysed relevant for the present article were references to ‘what is good about Wix’ and to ‘the bilingual stream’. Thus, all open responses referring to these two themes were analysed to draw out subthemes relating to effectiveness indicator theory, as outlined above.

### 5 Findings and discussion

First, I will describe the linguistic situation in the three streams, before I establish to what extent Wix is indeed perceived as a ‘good’ school by the research participants. Then, I report to what extent the participants comments comply with the school effectiveness indicators, and what role the bilingual stream played in this.

#### 5.1 Research participants

In their letters to Sam, children indicated their home language(s). As can be seen from Table 6, in the Classic stream the majority of the children speak the respective languages of instruction at home, namely in the English Classic stream 20 out of 45 speak English at home, and in the French Classic stream 23 out of 55 speak French at home. In the bilingual stream it is relatively balanced between those who speak English (13), French (16 and English and French (16) at home. There is a number of children who speak language(s) other than English or French at home: 7 in the English Classic stream, and 2 in the bilingual stream. In the French stream all children speak at least one of the school languages, sometimes in combination with other languages (5). Interestingly, in the classic English stream, there are 6 children who speak French and 4 who speak English and French at home, and in the French Classic stream 7 speak English and 16 speak English and French at home. However, there are no provisions for these children to develop the two languages, beyond the foreign language classes offered to all, and informal opportunities in the playground.

Table 6: languages spoken at home (based on children’s letters to Sam)

	English	French	English + French	English, French + other	English + other	French + other	Other	Missing	Total
English classic	20	6	4		7		7	1	45
French classic	7	23	16	3	1	1		4	55

Bilingual	13	16	16	3	3	1	2	1	55
	40	45	36	6	11	2	9	6	155

## 5.2 Wix is considered a good school

The informal observation underlying this study is that Wix has been improving as a school. The findings reported below show that stakeholders almost unanimously agree that Wix is a good school, and that children are happy at Wix.

Table 7: Wix is a good school

Sample	Instrument	Proportion of positive responses	Responses
Children	150 letters to Sam (8 not completed)	100%	Open format: between “good” or “bien” and “perfect” or “génial”
Parents	146 questionnaires (none missing)	98.6%	Likert scale: Agree Strongly agree
Staff	32 questionnaires (2 not completed)	100%	Likert scale: Agree Strongly agree

Table 8: Children are happy at Wix

Sample	Instrument	Proportion of positive responses	Responses
Parents	145 questionnaires (1 missing)	100%	Likert scale: Agree Strongly agree
Staff	33 Questionnaires (1 missing)	99.4%	Likert scale: Agree Strongly agree

## 5.3 Wix and effectiveness indicators

The data analysed for this consisted of open responses given on the questionnaires and letters and interview data. I coded this data based on school effectiveness indicators summarised in Table 1. This showed that participants felt that the school developed in all four areas, but, like in any school, scope for improvement was also identified with regard to all of these.

**Internal communication and relationships (domain 1):** Participants mentioned a range of positive or constructive internal interactions as something they appreciate in Wix. These comprised communication between people as outlined in Table 9, which paints a picture of positive horizontal and vertical relationships.

Table 9: Positive communication and relationships

Communication between	Appreciated by	Evidence
Children	Children	13 Children's letters 3 children's interviews
Children and staff	Children Parents	8 children's letters 1 parent questionnaire
Children and the heads	Children Staff	3 children's interviews 1 staff interview
The two heads	Staff Parents	5 staff interviews 2 parent questionnaires
Teachers	staff	5 staff interviews 3 staff questionnaires

Participants identified scope for improvement above all in the relationship between the English and the French school (9 staff interviews, 8 parent questionnaires, 8 staff questionnaires). Nearly all of these felt more could or should be done to integrate the English and French stream. It was also recognised, however, that a great deal had been achieved in this respect (10 staff interviews, 3 staff questionnaires, 1 parent questionnaire). Wix staff mentioned this as an on-going process, and it is assumed the bilingual stream played a role in this. An analysis of the collaboration and the social integration between the two schools will be discussed in a separate article (in progress).

**External relationships with parents and the community (domain 2):** A number of staff and parents reported good relationships between staff and parents (7 parent questionnaires, 6 teacher interviews, 1 staff questionnaire). It seems that the communication between the TWI teachers and the respective parents is more intensive than in the other streams. The parents in the bilingual stream are reported to be engaged and interested, which is not so surprising, given they opted into the bilingual stream, and to a certain extent volunteered their children to pilot a novel school approach (year 3 and 4 were the first TWI cohorts).

**Openness to innovation and change (domain 3):** It seems to be Wix's strength to be open to change, to take risks and to work on continuous improvement. Evidence for this is summarised in Table 10.

Table 10: Openness to innovation and change

The school is open towards	Opinion held by	Evidence
Innovation	Staff Parents	1 staff questionnaire 3 staff interviews 2 parent questionnaires
Openness to improve	Parents Staff	6 parent questionnaires 2 staff interviews
Taking risks	Staff	3 staff interviews
Changing staff	Staff	1 staff interview

First of all Wix was seen as open towards innovation and actively working towards improving the school and its provisions. The TWI project was recognised as an innovative intervention in terms of programme and curriculum. Furthermore, there is some evidence that there is also some openness towards taking risk on the part of the two head teachers. This willingness to take risks was condoned by authorities, apparently since there was the sense that there was not much to lose at WPS at the time. It was mentioned that a staff change was required, since the school needed staff who espoused the changing culture and ethos of the school. Thus, the data largely supports the view that the school worked towards innovation by taking risks. Not all agree though, two parents (questionnaires) felt that the heads do either not respond to criticism or have no clear vision.

**Ethos of high expectations, caring and respect (domain 4):** Another strong point of Wix seems to be its caring environment, where all children, teachers and the school itself is expected to do well. Thus Wix was seen as a learning school, where adults model learning behaviour and respectful interaction with others that they would like the children to adopt (13 parent questionnaires, 5 staff interviews, 4 staff questionnaires). A few participants still recognised challenges, mainly relating to the differences in Wix, i.e. that the lower achieving English classic stream (1 parent questionnaire), or children who need support (1 staff and 1 parent questionnaire) should receive more, and that children should have more respect towards adults (1 staff interview) or other children, namely the French group (1 parent questionnaire).

#### 5.4 The role of the bilingual stream in school improvement

Looking at what role the bilingual stream played in any changes, the data provided by participants showed that the bilingual stream seemed indeed related to school improvement and to all four school effectiveness domains established in Table 1. In Table 11, references relating to these themes are summarised, and evidence is provided, including illustrative quotes.

Table 11: Role of bilingual stream in school improvement

TWI played a role in:	Evidence	Quotes
School improvement	32 ref	<p>“I mean the fact that the bilingual classes are sort of there, they’re popular, we’re actually pulling more pupils into the school” [WPS management]</p> <p>“So it’s improved the quality of the teaching and teachers across the school.” (WPS management)</p>
Innovation and development	20 ref	<p>“we get a lot of visitors here from other schools and even different parts of the country coming down and spending time to see just how we have achieved this great thing that we’re doing.” (WPS support staff)</p>
Internal social relations	15 ref	<p>“ on est parti en classe découverte avec les enfants du bilingue et on les a mélangé. Donc ça a permis aux enfants de se rencontrer.”(EdW French teacher)</p>

		“So I mean we’ve gone from not doing anything together to doing various activities together.” (WPS management)
Respectful and caring environment	10 ref	“it’s a very close and caring and warm school where I’m pretty sure that the teachers know everybody by name” (WPS parent)  “I think it’s a good environment when the teachers are learning as well and the children can see that the teachers are all learning and working together, so we do that.” (WPS TWI teacher)
External social relations	9 refs	“the tabletop sale that was sort of a parent initiative...” (WPS support staff)  “[les parents bilingues] Ils ont envie de connaître, ils ont envie de partager.” (EdW TWI teacher)

**School improvement:** A number of participants agreed that the bilingual stream played a role in improving the school. They felt it helped improve above all the reputation of Wix. WPS started to attract more middle-class families who want to enrol their children in the bilingual stream. Due to the fact that there is a waiting list for the bilingual stream, some then enrol their children in the English classic streams. Thus some parents who actively seek good education opportunities for their children choose Wix (incl. the Classic stream). This may be a reason why the proportion of Free School Meals had decreased in this stream. The greater demand has led to more pupils (fuller classes), which increased the income, since in state schools, the government pays a fee per pupil, and the teacher and the classroom cost the same whether or not the classroom is full or not. The extra money meant that the school infrastructure could be improved. For example a pirate ship could be acquired for the playground which is much loved by the pupils (40 children’s letters). The better reputation and the innovation factor appear to have attracted teachers who want to work and invest in this school, and not just see it as a stepping stone to move to a better school in the future. Additionally, the increased reputation seems to help attract local sponsorship for events, and “put[s] the school on the map” (WPS management).

**Innovation and development:** The bilingual stream has been reported as “bold and inspirational” (WPS TWI parent), as a risky undertaking for the school, and for parents. While it had its sceptics at the beginning, the bilingual stream is now accepted and it adds a unique selling point. It attracts many visitors from other schools and policy makers, which is another indication that the school has gained pioneer status in terms of two-way immersion education in England. It is not just innovative in terms of programme design, but also allows teachers in the bilingual stream to develop their practice through interaction with their counterpart in the other school and other streams.

**Internal social relations:** The bilingual stream was reported to have played an important role in facilitating social interaction across the two schools and between the streams. TWI teachers reported to work very closely together, the French and the English classic sides had regular joint projects, but communication between the French and the English stream were

still relatively infrequent. Thus, the bilingual stream has acted as a social, linguistic and cultural mediator. More recently, there was talk about integrating all three streams, and the first year 1 whole school sports day happened in Summer 2011. Similarly a joint school council had been set up with delegates from each class from all three streams. The bilingual stream may be directly or indirectly responsible for the continued interest in joint activities that integrates the two schools and the three streams. After all, implementing the bilingual stream showed that joint projects can be done and it created the communication channels necessary to generate joint activities.

**External relations:** In terms of external relations, the bilingual stream has played a role in bringing in enthusiastic parents who get involved not just in the bilingual stream but in whole school events, or as governors etc. Thus, all classes can benefit from this. One of the teachers feels that the bilingual stream attracts local French families to the school, making the school a mirror of the surrounding community. Clearly, both WPS and EdW could claim that they make links to the wider community locally and internationally by linking with each other. Indeed each school established a close partnership with a school that has a different language, culture and socio-economic status, and is administrated by a different country.

**Respectful and caring environment:** The presence of the bilingual stream and the improved reputation has attracted better quality teachers who were interested in developing a long-term commitment to collaborative practices and model positive behaviour of learning and collaboration across linguistic boundaries. The current heads, some parents and especially the TWI teachers appear to model bilingual and cooperative behaviour between the two schools, which seems to feed into a bilingual and caring learning environment for all, and an improvement of the school climate. The data shows that many children respect, trust and like their teachers and the teachers have on the whole high expectations of their pupils.

**Challenges:** The data clearly showed, that this is a project in progress and there are still challenges that need to be addressed. There is scope to further improve social interaction between members of the two schools. Indeed the schools and the bilingual stream actively embrace this challenge. Like other TWI schools, Wix ought to address the challenge of valuing all languages that children bring to school, not just English and French. It is very likely that the enthusiastic members of staff will find new innovative ways of further integration and linguistic inclusion.

## **6 Discussion and conclusion**

This article presents findings from a unique school setting in London, and shows that the bilingual stream in all likelihood made an important contribution to school improvement in Wix.

Wix as a school seems to have been effective in important domains of school effectiveness, as outlined by Hurrelman (2005) and Pritchett Johnson et al. (2000), especially in terms of openness to innovation and change, and to building caring environments, where people have high expectations of staff and children. The bilingual stream played a role in school



improvement mainly in the areas of innovation, school demographics, and change and in terms of social interaction between the schools and between streams.

Considering Coe's (2000) warning that we can never be sure which factor contributed to school improvement, we can say with some certainty that the implementation of the bilingual stream attracted external interest and 'put the school on the map'. It is hard to say to what extent the increased external interest influenced the school, or to what extent, as Codd (1993) sees it, this may have been due to a self-fulfilling prophecy. He argues that once a school is perceived as 'good', it can become a self-fulfilling prophecy, especially where parents have certain choices. In the case of Wix, the reputation helped attract teachers and parents who were ready to invest in the school, leading to a virtuous circle, as expressed by a bilingual teacher: "c'est le cercle vertueux; quand ça fonctionne bien les gens s'engagent et ça fonctionne encore mieux, etc...". The main contribution that the bilingual stream made was that it made Wix a pioneering school at the forefront of innovation.

In answer to the research question, I argue based on the above that the bilingual stream first of all attracted attention through taking on a pioneering role in school innovation in England. It made Wix a school that serves as a model and source of inspiration for other schools and policy makers. Second, it made a significant contribution to the state school's reputation, which had positive effect in terms of attracting quality and open-minded teachers and families from more socio-economically mixed backgrounds, thus changing the demographics of the school and feeding into the wider school vision of innovation and openness. Third, the bilingual stream acted as a mediator between the two schools, which enabled a gradual integration between the schools and the streams, and improved the school climate benefitting all. Thus, it initiated a collaboration between schools, which in itself is seen as a means to improve schools (West 2010:110). West is of the opinion that collaboration between schools can bring benefits for students, teachers and school, but certain conditions need to be met for these to be realised: "appropriate incentives, shared responsibility for success, leaders who understand how to collaborate, common priorities for improvement, informed external support, and an overriding belief that groups of schools working together for the benefit of all of their students is preferable to schools competing in order to benefit the few in any particular school". As could be shown, many of these conditions had been met by Wix, especially shared responsibility, joint leadership and common priorities for improvement.

In this case study, the bilingual stream is clearly seen as a tool or a motor for improvement in terms of the three points mentioned above. Based on the analysis, we can see that the positive influence of the bilingual stream appeared to flourish under the wider umbrella of a long-term vision and commitment towards a caring school that facilitates learning for all. It seems that staff at all levels and in all streams increasingly subscribe to this greater vision of which the bilingual stream and the cooperation between the schools forms a part. Again heeding Coe's (2000) warning, a long-standing WPS teacher pointed out that the improvement had already started before the bilingual stream started, namely when the new head teacher started. This indicates that the bilingual stream was not the sole school improvement measure, but played a role as part of a greater vision, and provides value added for this greater project.

*“Y’a vraiment une valeur ajoutée parce que la filière bilingue est là. “ (EdW TWI teacher)*

*“Il faudrait organiser des interventions et là, la filière bilingue elle est vraiment moteur, paramotrice par rapport à ça. “ (EdW TWI teacher)*

Thus, in this particular and unique case the bilingual stream has indeed contributed substantially to school improvement, but this was part of a wider holistic vision of changing the whole school ethos rather than seeing it as an isolated intervention.

In terms of theory, this study indicates that, besides linguistic and social benefits, there may indeed be a school-improvement angle to TWI education. To understand, to what extent other factors may also play a role (Coe 2009), there need to be further and larger studies in other contexts. In terms of school effectiveness theory, I argue that implementing a bilingual stream in England is an innovative intervention that opens up further opportunities for improvement, based on the four domains identified by Hurrelmann (2005) and Pritchett Johnson et al. (2000). However, further studies would have to establish under what conditions a bilingual stream can benefit a school in other contexts. More studies are also required in terms of cooperation between TWI and mainstream, between state and international schools, and between other schools that may have no partner school such as the WPS or EdW respectively.

Based on this study, I conclude that schools may well want to consider a bilingual stream as a school improvement measure. However, it is important to be clear that such a measure can only lead to success as part of a well-thought out and holistic school improvement strategy, based on a long-term vision of innovation, and ethos of care and high expectations, working towards good internal and external communication.

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