Putonghua? Why not?

In Hong Kong, there is a growing trend of learning and using Putonghua. Many Hongkongers, from all walks of life, including businessmen, housewives, students, and the like, take Putonghua courses. Wherever one goes, he or she would hear somebody speaking Putonghua. Since the language is so popular and useful in Hong Kong why don't we put it as an examination subject in the HKCEE and HKALE? I have three reasons to support my proposal to include PTH as a compulsory subject in the HKCEE and HKALE.

First of all, ‘why should PTH be made a compulsory subject?’ The answer is very simple. As Chinese, it is vitally important for us to learn our own language and make good use of it. I guess no one would like to tell the others that he knows nothing about his mother-tongue! Students who learn Putonghua will no doubt know more about the Chinese culture. What’s more, with China joining the World Trade Organization, the mastery of Putonghua is essential and opens up more business opportunity. Someday, Putonghua will become as important as English. Making PTH a compulsory subject is the most efficient and also the fastest way to ensure students are well equipped with the necessary proficiency.

Besides, speaking fluent Putonghua enables students to find a better job in China. The introduction of the Closer Economic Partnership Agreement makes more and more Hong Kongers work across the border; this implies that the use of Putonghua becomes more common in their daily lives as Putonghua is the official language of China and the most common language among the people there. It helps us communicate with the local people and officials easily, for example, discussing political issues and cooperating with a Putonghua speaking partner. The gain we can get by mastering Putonghua is far beyond our expectations. I bet no one is willing to give up a better future. If our students know nothing about our mother tongue, it will be a disadvantage for them since it weakens their competitiveness when they seek for a job in China.

It is obvious that there is a need to make Putonghua a compulsory subject because the students’ proficiency in Putonghua can directly affect their future. This gives them a better chance of gaining a post since most employers will give a favourable consideration to those who can master both English and PTH. English has long been a compulsory subject in schools, why can’t we give PTH the same status as another compulsory subject in schools?