

Building Connections to Protect Ethnic Education: The Chōsen Schools' Intercultural Network

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Prompted by the desire to return to their homeland and reclaim their ethnic identity after the end of Japan's colonial rule, Zainichi Koreans taught their children the Korean language and educated them about their cultural heritage at what later became known as Chōsen schools. While neither the Japanese nor the South Korean government supported the Chōsen schools, the North Korean government provided them with financial support through an organization called Chongryun. Despite enduring suppression and discriminatory treatment by the Japanese government, Chōsen schools have managed to survive, becoming the largest foreign school system in Japan. This article examines the impact of activism by the Chōsen school community in protecting ethnic education and promoting intercultural engagement between Zainichi Koreans, Japanese, and foreign school communities. Focusing on three key events, the article examines efforts by the Chōsen school community to resolve bias and misunderstanding among members of the Japanese public concerning the ethnic education they provide. It argues that Zainichi Koreans' grassroots activities have helped to build intercultural connections with local communities and other foreign schools in Japan.

Keywords: Chōsen schools, ethnic education, Zainichi Koreans, MEXT, foreign schools in Japan

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