Global Mindsets:
Lessons from the case study of Japanese firms in Thailand

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Abstract
From the field research of 4 Japanese firms in Thailand, this paper considers what skills global human resources ought to have, which is what is called global mindsets. We can find that these firms eagerly need the human resources, who are capable of reproducing the identity of its headquarter around the world, managing local human resources in locally incorporated companies, and maximizing group companies’ profits.

Keywords
Japanese corporations, global mindset, field based research, Thailand

1. Introduction
This paper defines the global mindset, which global human resources ought to have. Although there are a lot of previous researches about global human resources, we believe most of them are not practical, but theoretical. We believe these researches lack the view that how global mindsets affect in the real business world, and why global mindsets are significant. Then, we conducted the field research of Japanese firms in Thailand, and redefined the global mindset, so that it could be applicable to the real situation where corporations are working overseas.

In chapter 2, we analyzed the previous researches about global mindsets so that we could make it clear what global human resources are generally supposed to be. In chapter 3, we stated the method of the case study. In chapter 4, we referred to the case study of Japanese corporations in Thailand, and considered the qualification, which global human resources working abroad for Japanese companies ought to have. In chapter 5, we discussed the difference between the previous researches and case study,
so that we could redefine what skills global human resources ought to have. In chapter 6, we conclude the discussion on the global mindsets. In chapter 7, we showed the directions for future research.

2. Previous Research

Nowadays, we can see a lot of literatures and works on global human resources. First of all, we would like to analyze them and make it clear what global mindsets are.

2.1 The Global Mindsets Defined by the Japanese Government Ministry in Japan

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology reported that there are three main qualifications for global human resources as indicated below.

Global human resources ought to have:

I: language proficiency and communication skills
II: activeness, independence, cooperativeness, flexibility, responsibility, and a spirit of challenge
III: cross-cultural understandings and an identity as Japanese

( Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2011)

2.2 The Global Mindsets Defined by The Global Company

Also, accenture plc, which is a multinational management consulting, technology services, and outsourcing company, defines what global human resources are as described below.

People those who have global mindsets can:

I: think actively
II: tell their thoughts to their colleges, clients, and customers who have various backgrounds.
III: overcome the difference of values and properties came from cultural and historical backgrounds, and understand each other from a different perspective.
IV: make use of those differences, create a synergy effect, and create a new value. (Accenture, 2011)

2.3 The Global Mindsets Defined by The Overseas Business Magazine

On the other hand, there are a lot of literatures about global mindsets overseas. Mansour and his colleagues discussed global human resources in the Harvard Business Review (2010) as indicated below.

To succeed overseas, you need a global mind-set. It comprises:
I: Intellectual Capital; General knowledge and capacity to learn
Global business savvy
Cognitive complexity
Cosmopolitan outlook
II: Psychological Capital
Openness to differences and capacity for change; Passion for diversity
Thirst for adventure
Self-assurance
III: Social Capital; Ability to build trusting relationships with and among people who are different from you
Intercultural empathy
Interpersonal impact
Diplomacy

2.4 The Global Mindsets Defined by The Academic Paper

There are many academic papers that define global mindsets. Levy and her colleagues (1999) have attempted to define the global mindset construct. They reached the following conclusion:
Global mindset is a cognitive structure composed of two constructs, cosmopolitanism (an enthusiastic appreciation of other cultures) and cognitive complexity (the ability to perceive situations as highly differentiated and to integrate these differentiated constructs).
2.5 Limitations of Previous Research

From previous researches, it was found that global human resources ought to have cosmopolitanism, communication skills, and management skills in the situation, which is composed of different values and cultures.

In this way, many researches on global mindsets have been conducted so far. However, it should be pointed out that these researches have limits in two ways. First, they lack the view that global human resources belong to certain corporation or organization. Second, we wonder whether the global mindsets of the previous researches are true for Japanese firms, which are less advanced than Western firms in globalization. From these perspectives, this paper seeks to make one contribution to global mindsets’ studies, so that they can be adapted to the current situation in which human resources of Japanese firms overseas are.

3. The Sample and Procedures

We conducted the research of four Japanese firms in Thailand, so that we can make it clear what kind of global human resources firms working overseas really need. The survey has been done in December 2013 in Thailand. The first target firm is one of the biggest food manufacturers in Japan, whose ratio of overseas revenue is around 50% and which is still expanding overseas. The second firm is the auto parts manufacturer, which has significant market share in the world in its industry. The third firm is the marketing division of food manufacturer, which trades its products between Thailand and Japan. The fourth firm is the business process-outsourcing firm, and we interviewed the young Japanese employee, who starts his career in Thailand. As these Japanese firms have successfully worked overseas, they are appropriate for the target of our research. About the details of all samples, see Table I. We are going to use the firm’s code within Table I in the following chapters.
4. The case study

First of all, we focus on the role which the Japanese expatriates are expected to play in the locally incorporated firms. Nowadays, when a Japanese company expands overseas, it normally establishes a locally incorporated firm and expatriates from its headquarter take the managerial post.

4.1 The Ability to Reproduce a Corporate Identity Around the World

1) The case of Firm B: Instill its Identity in its Office in Thailand

According to the survey on Firm B, expatriates from its headquarter are expected to govern its locally incorporated company, and to instill its identity and compliance there. Firm B puts much value on its identity, which affects the assessment strategy of salespeople. Its salespeople visit each retail store to put its products there, so that its products can be speeded in the market. The evaluation criterion is based on how many invoices its salesperson gets, and how many kinds of products he/she sales. Firm B believes this criterion could realize its identity, "Spread its product to people around the world."

The interviewee mentioned if its locally incorporated firm runs against its headquarter’s identity and policy, it could pursue short-term profits, which could worsen its corporate image.
2）The case of Firm A: Instill its Identity in its Office in Thailand

Similarly, Firm A believes it is important for expatriates to instill its identity in its locally incorporated firm. As Firm A’s identity has been implicitly taken over since its establishment, Japanese expatriates take its identity for granted. However, they instill its identity in its product development, productive process, and quality management within its locally incorporated firm.

3）The case of Firm A: Respect for the work style of local staff in Thailand

However, Firm A does not force its philosophy on its locally incorporated firm, but respects for the work style of local staffs in Thailand. While keeping the core of its philosophy, Firm A flexibly adapts its identity to the local culture. This is because different people have different ways of working, and therefore we should respect for them to get better performance. According to the interviewee, for instance, different countries have different meanings of ‘teamwork’. In terms of Japanese teamwork, you are supposed to play not only your own role, but also the role, which you are not responsible for. On the other hand, in terms of American teamwork, you are expected to play your own role as seen in American Football. In this way, ways of working are different among countries. That is why Firm A carefully adapts its identity to its locally incorporated firm, keeping the core of its philosophy.

4）The case of Firm C: Instill its Identity in its Office in Thailand

The interviewee at Firm C stated that Japanese expatriates are expected to instill its identity, values, and strategy in its locally incorporated firm and govern it. Firm C, which manufactures and sells soy sauce in Thailand, has transferred its technology, know-how, and value to its locally incorporated firm through daily tasks. The interviewee mentioned that values of Firm C are common globally.

In his words, Japanese expatriates are supposed to work as a bridge between its office in Thailand and Japanese headquarter. This is because the managing director in its headquarter trusts its expatriates and he believes it is easier to communicate with them.

5）The case of Firm C: Strategy based on local situations

On the other hand, Firm C has developed strategies by country. This is because economic situations are different between urban and rural area, and systems of
wholesale and retail are also different among countries. In this case, Firm C flexibly develops strategies according to the local situation, conducting field investigations.

4.2 The Ability to Manage Local Staffs

1) The case of Firm B: Develop Local Staffs, Based on the Understanding of their Characteristics

According to the interviewee at Firm B, expatriates from its headquarter in Japan are expected to develop local staffs and pursue localization of human resources. In his words, it is important to develop local staffs for some reasons. In the hierarchical society, the Thai generally have a tendency to be full of the high spirit of self-advancement, enthusiasm, and motivations, and to have a strong hungry spirit than Japanese. In addition, they tend to require a periodical evaluation and appropriate feedback for their work. For these reasons, expatriates from its headquarter in Japan are expected to understand their tendency to be conscious of their career, give them responsible tasks as opportunities of their growth, evaluate them and give them feedbacks regularly. Conversely, if expatriates could not satisfy these expectations, Thai employees would be less motivated, and in worst case, change the job.

2) The case of Firm B: The Advantage of Localization of human resources

It is also significant to localize human resources for some reasons. If expatriates from its headquarter in Japan successfully cultivate excellent local staffs, they can easily instruct and support their colleagues and subordinates with the same language and cultural backgrounds. Also, firms should quickly develop excellent local staffs as firms expand business in booming emerging markets. Assuming that Firm B’s headquarter has developed excellent local staffs in its locally incorporated company in Country X. When its headquarter launches new business in Country Y, whose culture is almost same as Country X, it is more efficient that excellent local staffs from Country X engage in the new business in Country Y, than that Japanese expatriates develop newly local staffs in Country Y. However, all of the staffs in its locally incorporated firm are not necessarily composed of local staffs. For the purposes of instilling Firm B’s identity in its locally incorporated company and coordinating its headquarter in Japan and its locally incorporated company, Japanese expatriates would continue to pursue the business in the local office while the number of them would gradually decrease.
3) The case of Firm B: The Growth and Possibility of Local Staffs

According to the survey on Firm B, local staffs in Thailand are excellent because some of them have experiences of studying abroad and global standpoints. From the interviewee, Thai are much more globalized than Japanese.

Thai candidate executives in Firm B can take the following seminars: (Ⅰ) Leadership Seminar for a section chief, held in each area, (Ⅱ) Future Leader Seminar for a future manager held in Japan, and (Ⅲ) Group Leader Seminar for a future managing director. There are above three seminars. Japanese staffs can also take the Group Leader Seminar.

According to the interviewee, Firm B sends one Thai staff as an executive trainee for a year to the headquarter. This is also same in the Philippines and Brazil. Although the job rotation across countries has not been carried out so much because it takes money and time to prepare for the job rotation, it is likely that Firm B would officially carry out a job rotation.

4) The case of Firm A: The Importance of Localization of human resources

According to the survey on Firm A, it was found that it is significant to develop and manage local staffs. The localization of managers is the particular problem in Asia, in the interviewee’s words. Japanese staffs take most managerial posts in the Asian branches of Firm A. The managing directors in all Asian branches are composed of Japanese, with the exception of the Australian branch. In European and American branches, about half of managers are composed of local staffs, while about 20 percent are composed of local staffs in Thailand. Being aware of this situation, Japanese expatriates are expected to develop and localize local human resources as their successor. Therefore, the human resources department of Firm A makes succession plans for local candidate executives while discussing with managing directors in ASEAN branches.

5) The case of Firm A: Development of Local Staffs, based on the understanding of their Characteristics

The problem in developing local staffs is that Thai staffs tend to be passive. Although developing local staffs is important, when Japanese expatriates give local staffs too much responsible tasks, the quality of outcomes could be worse and it could take a
longer time to complete tasks. Since Firm A is facing severe competition from its competitors in growing markets, it is significant to keep up with the speed of competitors’ business expansions. However, it is not desirable to give fewer opportunities to local staffs simply because Firm A assigns the highest priority to the speed and efficiency.

In addition, another problem is that Thai employees tend to wait for instructions from their managers. They do not usually take new actions and propose something new because these are not their routines. In contrast, Japanese managers encourage local staffs to propose new suggestions and, create cross-sectional team projects, which are composed of young local staffs.

6) The case of Firm A: The Headquarter’s Identity, respecting for Values of Local Staffs

Moreover, another problem is whether its locally incorporated company in Thailand should adopt Japanese work style or Thai’s. In this case, Firm A respects for the work style of its headquarter. The work style of its headquarter means that staffs work based on the identity and values of the headquarter. In the interviewee’s words, Firm A respects for cultures and values of local staffs, based on the identity of the headquarter.

7) The case of Firm A: The Advantages of Adopting Local Staffs

The local staffs play a significant role for a new business, which utilizes a basic technology of Firm A. For example, there is a great market for two-wheeled vehicle in Asia, and Firm A is engaged in expanding projects of auto parts for two-wheeled vehicle. In this case, it is important to understand the needs in Thailand. Firm A also established the total service shop in Cambodia in 2013. Since there is a market for used cars in Cambodia, customers often add and change options of products. In order to meet such a demand, Firm A considers the reinforcement of the total service shop in the near future. At the same time, local staffs can be expected to play an active role in these business environments, and it is also required to develop them.

8) The case of Firm A: Growth and Possibility of the Local Staffs

Firm A has also strengthened functions of its technical centers, so that each branch can understand local needs, make plans, and design in a short term. Firm A has established
its technical centers in China, Europe, the United States, Thailand and India. While Firm A formerly had the development functions only in Japan, and has developed the cars for Asian users in Japan. It took longer time for business, and it was difficult to understand the needs. Therefore, Firm A established the technical center in Thailand when a finished vehicle manufacturer introduced "The Car for Asian users". Firm A has gradually enhanced functions of this technical center and has encouraged the development there. In this technical center, there are 90 engineers including 10 Japanese from each division of the locally incorporated company in Thailand. Japanese staffs take managerial posts on each division and give technical instructions through dairy tasks. The headquarter in Japan holds meetings by telephone and TV almost every day, and sends Japanese staffs to Firm A. Japanese staffs are by turns always in the technical center. Firm A are planning to double the number of staffs in the technical center by 2015, and lays emphasis on developing local staffs still more in the near future, in the interviewee’s words.

9) The case of Firm C : The Importance of Managing Local Staffs

According to the survey on Firm C, the earlier Japanese staffs work abroad as expatriates, the more they can develop the managerial ability. On the other hand, if Japanese staffs are sent abroad as expatriates in the too early stage of their carrier, they tend to persist in their own way of management. In the interviewee’s words, it is also important that they learn the basics of management from their managers.

It is important for Japanese expatriates to show the enough ability as a manager, in order to be trusted as a manager by local staffs in Thailand, in his words. The local staffs in Thailand are aware of what expatriates can do. Therefore, it is significant for Japanese staffs to make core strength. The interviewee stated that expatriates should not find the strong point peculiar to Japanese. Japanese staffs have had authorities so far because Japanese head office had strong influences on locally incorporated firms. In terms of individuals’ ability, Japanese staffs generally have a lot of weak points such as negotiation skills. Japanese staffs sometimes pay attention only to the headquarter in Japan. In his words, if you believe Japan is the best and you should make use of strongpoints as Japanese, you could prevent the globalization in Japan from advancing. The interviewee mentioned that it is important not to persist in the way of your home country.
10) The case of Firm C: The Growth and Problems of Local Staffs

It is considered that local staffs employed in foreign capital firms in Thailand including Firm C generally have high academic abilities. The interviewee at Firm C mentioned that they study harder than Japanese university students, and have a sense of duty to be a higher rank in hierarchy. The interviewee sometimes takes charge of lectures of the manufacturing methods at some colleges. He saw students studying hard even during break time. In addition, the lectures are based on English, which is more advanced than Japan. Thai staffs in Firm C perform well in the morning meeting and discussion, in his words. Thai staffs come to improve their work in routine work. Firm C develops the corporate strategy while accepting suggestions and opinions from Thai staffs. Thai staffs often have better opinions as to how they should sell soy sauce. This is because the Thai staffs understand better than Japanese how soy sauce should be used in Thai dish.

On the other hand, Thai staffs have lower loyalty for their company. They, especially young and excellent staffs, sometimes change their jobs. They are eager for self-growth. If they think they can achieve self-growth in a firm, they will continue to work for the firm. However, if not, they might change their jobs. In short, it is important for Japanese expatriates to give them worthwhile tasks that can be helpful for their growth, in interviewee’s words.

11) The case of Firm D: A Manager develops the Ability of his Subordinate

We interviewed Mr. E, the Japanese first year worker in Firm D in Thailand. When he entered Firm D, he often start to talk without arranging the main points. Then, his superior told him to have the sense of purpose of his discussion, arrange the main points before discussion, and realize that listeners make their time for him. He has paid close attention the way of talking since he got the advice from his superior; “You should get your idea sorted, make a conclusion clear, and write them down in a memo before talking.” Finally, he can talk logically and briefly now.

In addition, what was impressive in Mr. E’s talk is that if someone asks you to do some tasks, he is actually tested. In words of Mr. E, a superior expects his subordinate to do better on daily tasks. Therefore, it is important for subordinates to work to meet the expectation, so that the superior would give his subordinate more responsible tasks. Repeating this cycle, the subordinate grows better and faster.
12) The case of Firm D: You Grow With Greater Experiences

Mr. E, who is the leader of the operator team, mentioned that the more responsible tasks you get in your earlier career, the better and the faster you grow. This is because working with a sense of ownership is significant for your growth.

Mr. E believes that it is important to think through an answer. In his words, you can grow better if you find a problem and think through a solution.

4.3 Maximizing group Firm’s Profits


Firm A in Thailand works as the operational headquarter in ASEAN area. Thus, Firm A adopts human resources not only from Thailand, but also from other countries. According to the interviewee, he will select his successor not from Thailand, but from the Philippines. He mentioned that it is important to allocate personnel from group firms, so that he could maximize group firm’s profits.

2) The case of Firm B: Synergy Effects Within Each Branch Office

Firm B in Thailand has been selling its products in Myanmar and Laos as well as Thailand. The interviewee at Firm B mentioned that Firm B would trade its products among more and more countries. In this case, those who can look down upon the whole group and maximize group firm’s profits would be required.

3) The case of Firm B: Potential of Japanese to Maximize Group Firm’s Profits

The interviewee at Firm B mentioned Japanese can relatively take a fair and panoramic view, and respectfully communicate with others. In this way, Japanese are expected to work abroad as a bridge among branches and countries.

4.4 The Same View From Each Interviewee: Globalization in the Future

Each interviewee gives us the same key message. According to each of them, the globalization in Japanese firms, especially in Japanese human resources, are less advanced than Western. Japanese expatriates have taken the posts of managing director in locally incorporated firms. However, if Japanese firms intend to realize the true
globalization, Japanese expatriates do not necessarily take the posts of managing director in locally incorporated firms. Rather, they should put the right people in the right jobs, regardless of nationality.

In this case, Japanese would face competition against excellent human resources overseas. In fact, the interviewees at Firm C mentioned, as young human resources in Thailand are excellent, hardworking, and have got international scopes, there would not be traditional guaranteed positions for Japanese. In this way, with advancement of localization of human resources and globalization, Japanese human resources will govern locally incorporated firms from headquarter, and human resources other than Japanese could take the posts at headquarter. Considering such a situation, Japanese human resources must pay much more attention to the true global mindsets.

5. Discussion

This paper analyzed the previous researches on global human resources, considering the situation, where Japanese firms working overseas are. Now we would like to analyze the case study to find what global mindsets these firms require. First, analyzing 1), 2), and 4) of chapter 4.1, it is clear that expatriates are expected to instill identity and values of head offices into locally incorporated firms. This is because headquarters’ identity and values help locally incorporated firms function as one of the group firms. Analyzing 3) and 5) of chapter 4.1, it is also obvious that it is not desirable to force headquarters’ philosophy on locally incorporated firms. Understanding and respecting for values and cultural backgrounds, expatriates should instill headquarters’ identity and values into locally incorporated firms. Additionally, global human resources are supposed to think and act from global perspectives. Therefore we conclude one of the global mindsets is the ability to reproduce a corporate identity around the world while respecting for others with different backgrounds and values.

Further, analyzing 2) and 7) of chapter 4.2, local staffs in locally incorporated firms can smoothly communicate with their colleagues and bosses with similar cultural backgrounds, and can easily understand situations and needs of the local market. Additionally, analyzing 3), 4), 8), and 9) of chapter 4.2, as locally incorporated firms have expanded business, they need more and more local staffs. At the same time, headquarters have gradually accepted local human resources to let them take training programs. Also, analyzing 1), 5), 6), and 10) of chapter 4.2, Thais tend to have
willingness to grow, and expect enough evaluations and supports from their managers. On the other hand, Thais also tend to be passive and await instructions. Therefore, the point is that you should give proper discretions to local human resources, and regularly evaluate and support them. Moreover, the way of working in Thai offices is basically based on headquarters’ styles, taking local values into account. Besides, analyzing 11) and 12) of chapter 4.2, it is found that human resources grow much better when their managers give them bigger experiences and support them. From examining these evidences, it is clear the localization of human resources within Japanese firms in Thailand has not completely done, which could have an impact on the globalization of Japanese firms in the near future. In other words, Japanese headquarters will be expected to train local staffs and let them manage locally incorporated firms. Thus, we conclude one of the global mindsets is the ability to train and manage local staffs, based on the understanding of their characteristics.

Besides, analyzing 1), 2), and 3) of chapter 4.3, it is clear that Japanese expatriates working in various countries are expected to pay attention not only to one branch, but also to entire groups, so that they could maximize group firms’ profits. Also, the assumption that Japanese can neutrally view things and communicate, respecting for others, is now widely accepted. This characteristic of Japanese would be competent for expatriates, who are supposed to make decisions, considering their group profits. Therefore, we conclude one of the global mindsets is the ability to maximize group firm’s profits.

From examining the findings above, Japanese expatriates have big authorities, make decisions, and manage local staffs at locally incorporated firms. That is why we can conclude global mindsets would be what we mentioned above.

Here, there are some differences between results of the previous research and the case study. The first reason is that, considering chapter 2.5, the previous researches do not consider the fact human resources work for profits of their company, and therefore they are not practical. In the case study, we considered the real situation where Japanese firms working overseas are, so that we could discuss the global mindsets that can be suited to the real business world.

Secondly, as we considered from chapter 4.4 the fact the globalization of Japanese firms generally less advanced, the global mindsets defined by the previous research could not be adapted to Japanese firms. It is widely accepted that western firms give
authorities to locally incorporated firms, and govern them. On the other hand, Japanese firms expect expatriates to have big authorities, make decisions, spread firms’ identity, and manage local staffs at locally incorporated firms. Therefore, Japanese expatriates could not completely play their roles only with the skills to communicate and understand different cultures. Rather, the global human resources, which Japanese firms really need, would be expected to spread firms’ identity and maximize group firms’ profits, based on the skills above. In light of the discussion above, we would like to make a conclusion and show directions for future study.

5. Conclusion
The objective of this paper was to reveal the global mindsets that Japanese human resources ought to have. From the previous research, global human resources ought to have cosmopolitanism, communication skills, and management skills in the situation, where different values and cultures exist. Then, this paper considered the present situation, where Japanese firms are working. As a result, we could conclude that Japanese human resources ought to obtain the global mindsets: to reproduce headquarter s’ identity around the world while respecting for others with different backgrounds and values, train and manage local staffs, based on the understanding of their characteristics, and maximize group firms’ profits.

6. Directions for Future Research
However, since we focused only on the case of Japanese firms, further consideration will be needed to yield any findings about cases of other foreign firms. Also, as the globalization advances, the situation of Japanese firms would be different. Considering the findings of chapter 4.4, it would be possible that Japanese firms adopt excellent human resources from different countries, regardless of their nationalities. In that case, human resources from different countries as well as local staffs could take the managerial posts that Japanese expatriates have taken at the locally incorporated firms so far. As a result, the current position of Japanese human resources would be no longer guaranteed.

In this case, the question remains as to what roles Japanese expatriates could play. According to the interviewee at Firm C, Japanese expatriates have taken the managerial posts at the locally incorporated firms because Japanese are more competent as a
manager than staffs in developing countries so far. However, in his words, as local staffs in developing countries grow, Japanese probably would face sever competition from these excellent human resources. Thus, Japanese should enhance their competitive advantage, so that they could compete with excellent people and survive the diverse business circumstances. In other words, Japanese should develop the global mindsets as leaders of next generation. Developing a sense of crisis for such a situation could help Japanese take the first step toward the global human resources.

We interviewed the Japanese worker, Mr. E, who has worked for firm D in Thailand. In his words, he has interacted with people with different backgrounds within and outside the company, so that he can develop a network to find an opportunity for his career. As a result, he can consider things from different standpoints and wants to do various jobs in various countries.

Today, it is considered that the ways of training human resources in some Japanese firms are based on the viewpoints, which the previous research on global mindsets support. The typical example is that some Japanese firms decided to make English an official language in their offices. Also, other Japanese firms force their employees to take qualifications such as TOEIC. As a result, these employees spend their time not to ‘use’ practical English, but to ‘study’ English.

However, the global mindsets, which Japanese firms actually need, should be based on the real business environments. Even if you speak English or other languages, you could not perform well around the world, without the global mindsets we mentioned above. Therefore Japanese firms should train human resources with this view in mind.

To conclude, we hope this paper could be helpful for those who want to develop the global mindsets, for firms that are engaged in training global human resources, and for young Japanese including us to enlighten ourselves.

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