***Genba-shugi*: The Hands-on Approach**

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**1. What gave rise to *genba-shugi*?**

The word “*genba*” (also written “*gemba*”) in Japanese has many meanings, making it difficult to translate. For example, the Cambridge Business Dictionary explains *genba* as follows:[[1]](#endnote-1) “In Japanese business theory, the place where things happen in manufacturing, used to say that people whose job is to manufacture products are in good place to make improvements in the manufacturing process.” In business management, the *genba* is defined as the forum where “the value-adding activities that satisfy the customer” take place (Imai 2012). Macpherson (2013) goes further, declaring that “Genba is all.” In other words, *genba* is not limited “just a physical place,” as portrayed in much of the “Anglosphere literature.” Rather, it implies a place “where events happen, experiences are gained, knowledge is generated and shared, the intrinsic becomes explicit, and intangible becomes tangible” (Macpherson 2013:16).

The reference to “*genba*” as more than simply a physical place is common to all of the works in English mentioned above. However, in Japanese, the term may be used in ways not explained in any of these works. For example, the expression “*genba no koe*” (literally “the voice of the *genba*”) refers not only to the opinions and comments expressed by “people” in the *genba* but also implies feelings and emotions that cannot be conveyed through text. “*Genba*” is much more than just a place: it also comprehends the people in the place, their movements and interactions, and even physical sensations too subtle for words. Adding the suffix “*shugi*” (roughly equivalent to “-ism” in English) to this term makes its meaning even harder to grasp. This is because “*shugi*” denotes not only the policies or attitudes of individuals but also the principles and fundamental rules espoused by groups and organizations. Not only does the term “*genba-shugi*” defy easy translation into English: it is a difficult concept to explain accurately even in Japanese.

Almost all of the previous research on *genba-shugi* does not provide a rigorous examination of the exact meaning of the term. Rather, it tends to provide hints at the meaning through individual case studies. The business history researcher Yamashita (2010), for example, describes existing research as “dependent on specific case studies and limited data, using *genba-shugi* as a concept to explore their various characteristics” (Yamashita 2010:86). The tendency of the term *genba-shugi* to obfuscate the point being made and the difficulty of using it in any rigorous analysis have caused it to fall out of use among researchers. At the same time, however, it has been adopted by businesspeople and politicians as a convenient concept that “enables the user to express a variety of different elements collectively” (Yamashita 2010:87).[[2]](#endnote-2)

The origin of these discussions on *genba-shugi* can be traced back to the time when Japanese companies were expanding their production bases around the world amid a trend towards globalization. They emerged against the backdrop of differences in attitudes towards production sites between Japanese technical staff and local engineers at overseas production bases. The term *genba-shugi* became used to explain these differences. Today, the term is used not only by engineers and students of business management but also—with the meaning left conveniently ambiguous—by politicians and businesspeople, especially those at the top of organizations.[[3]](#endnote-3)

The purpose of this paper is not to find a direct answer to the question “what is *genba-shugi*?” Rather, I ask “what gave rise to the usage of *genba-shugi* as a concept?” This is because simply summarizing the various meanings of the term, used ambiguously across a diverse range of contexts, would not lead to an understanding of the common approaches and attitudes underlying these meanings. I will specifically focus on the following three contexts. The first is *genba-shugi* in the context of Japanese engineers and business management, where the term has been discussed most vigorously (section 2). The second is *genba-shugi* as a specific characteristic of Japan’s development assistance, and technical cooperation in particular (section 3). The third is *genba-shugi* as used by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the organization responsible for implementing development assistance provided by the Japanese government (section 4). This last is because the examples presented in sections 2 and 3 are no longer sufficient given the recent emergence of the term in the context of politics, public administration and organizations, as described above. By comparing the various contexts in which the term *genba-shugi* has been used, I will reveal the inclination common to all of them to emphasize the user’s own superiority and initiative.

**2. The discovery of “Japanese-style” engineers and companies in contrast with those of Europe and the United States**

The emergence of *genba-shugi*—particularly as it relates to engineers and technical staff—as a topic of discussion in Japan was related to the experience of different local cultures of production and labor as Japanese companies expanded their production bases overseas from the second half of the 1970s through the 1980s. Until that time, overseas expansion by Japanese companies had consisted of the establishment of foreign sales bases aimed at expanding and enhancing sales networks. Subsequently, the dramatic rise in exports by Japanese companies from the era of rapid economic growth until the time of the oil crisis made it necessary to resolve trade frictions with countries in Southeast Asia and Europe, and with the United States (Ueno 1986:242-245). At around the same time, Japanese companies faced the challenge of rising export product prices due to an appreciating yen. Their response was to move production bases overseas (Ueno 1986:242-245, Cabinet Office 2012).

They attempted to introduce Japanese-style factory systems at these overseas production bases in Southeast Asia, Europe, and the United States by transferring technology to local employees (Ueno 1986:245-247). Japanese-style factory systems refer to systems where engineers with technical knowledge of production enter the production site to improve manufacturing processes and quality control through dialog with on-site employees. In the introduction of these systems, the reluctance of locally-hired engineers to personally engage with people and processes on the factory floor (*seisan* *genba*) at production sites, compared to their Japanese counterparts, became a focus of attention for Japanese researchers in fields such as business management and economic history (Yoneyama 1985, Dore 1987, Imano 1990). This difference in attitude provided ideal research material for academic fields concerned with the different developmental routes taken by Japan and Japanese companies compared to Europe and the United States. An increasing body of literature saw this engagement with the *genba* as a characteristic of Japanese-style business management.

*Genba-shugi* was already becoming widely accepted as a special feature of Japanese companies during the second half of the 1980s. For example, the Japan Economic Research Institute (1987) summarized its vision for the new industrial era as follows.

Ultimately, the distinctive features of Japanese business management, compared to that of foreign countries such as those in Europe and the United States, can be reduced to two points. The first point is “egalitarianism” or “humanism.” (...) The second point is “*genba-shugi*.” In contrast to American managers out of business school, who, it is said, only respect figures and are uninterested in the factory floor, Japanese managers have the utmost respect for the factory floor, beginning everything there (Japan Economic Research Institute 1987:19).

In a paper written during this period and recognized as a representative example of research on engineers’ *genba-shugi*, Morikawa (1988)[[4]](#endnote-4) argues as follows, with reference to his own observations of factories in the United States and the comparative research into Japanese and British factories by Dore (1987).

For Japanese engineers, the factory floor (*seisan* *genba*) is the most important workplace. The *genba* is an object of respect, from the time when engineers receive their training at the *genba*, through their unceasing work together with the factory workers. They are governed by a system of value norms under which those who devote themselves only to deskwork such as research, design, and the composition and amendment of operational manuals are, at least, not fit to be called engineers. In this sense, “genba-shugi” is an aspect unique to Japanese industry, and may even be seen as one factor underlying its technical prowess (Morikawa 1988:29).

Both the Japan Economic Research Institute and Morikawa contrast Japanese engineers and business management with those of Europe and the United States. This contrast represents a juxtaposition of the physical experience gained from actually using one’s eyes and hands on the factory floor with theoretical knowledge acquired from figures, logic, and research.

Considering the historical background to these arguments, they were not limited to a simple juxtaposition. Rather, they were put forward in the context of an attempt to demonstrate the superiority of Japanese-style business management over its counterparts in Europe and the United States. The arguments of both the Japan Economic Research Institute (1987) and Morikawa (1988) were born in an era when the Japanese economy had recovered—most swiftly of all the developed countries—from the oil crisis, and Japanese-style business management had become a major focus of international attention. Many people in Japan were becoming increasingly self-confident about the “Japanese-style” approach. Hirano (2011) analyzed the historical formation of Japanese-style business management. He indicates the overwhelmingly positive attitude of researchers toward Japan’s corporate management as one of the distinctive features of the rise in research on Japanese-style business management during the second half of the 1970s through the 1980s (Hirano 2011:138). At the same time, almost all researchers break with previous assumptions of the Japanese-style approach as consisting of “systems and customs aimed at avoiding competition.” Rather, they assess it as “no less competitive and efficient than those of Europe or the United States” (Hirano 2011:138).

Koike (1997) is one of the contemporaneous researchers. It had previously been thought that the internal rotation of personnel to allow them to experience various divisions and roles, a feature of Japanese companies, was inefficient as it failed to enhance the specialization of employees By contrast, Koike (1997) made the following discoveries through a comparison of factories in Japan and the United States. When problems occurred at factory production lines in Japan, managers and employees who had experience in various internal roles could meet to discuss solutions, thus leading to the swift discovery of ways to resolve issues: even those resulting from a combination of different factors. By contrast, factory production lines in the United States had few employees with experience in multiple roles. When problems occurred, there would be no discussion like those in Japan, and it would therefore take time to discover the cause and get the line running again (Koike 1997). Likewise, in terms of personnel development, whereas in Japan, more talented employees are rotated more quickly between different divisions and roles, allowing them to rise more swiftly in the organization, even talented employees find it difficult to achieve promotion in US factories, where greater specialization has limited the number of posts available (Koike 1997, Koike 2005). Research such as this by Koike and others argued that Japanese-style business management was more efficient and competitive than that of Europe and the United States.

Japanese engineers’ *genba-shugi* was thus used to explain differences with other countries, in particular with those in Europe and the United States. In this context, *genba-shugi* became used with a sense of superiority, implying that the greater emphasis placed on the factory floor (*seisan genba)* by Japanese engineers and companies, compared to their counterparts in Europe and the United States, leads to more efficient Japanese-style business management.

**3. The emphasis on Japanese uniqueness in contrast to European and US donors**

In this section, I will discuss *genba-shugi* in the context of Japan’s technical cooperation. Official development assistance (ODA) by the Japanese government began in 1954 with its participation in the Colombo Plan. Japan commenced technical cooperation, welcoming trainees and dispatching specialists, in the following year.

The focus of Japan’s technical cooperation up until the 2000s was “people.” In the Diplomatic Bluebooks published by Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), phrases such as “implemented through human contacts (...) to deepen mutual understanding” and fostering those “who will shoulder the task of future nation-building (*kuni-zukuri*)” appear frequently during this period (MOFA 1975, MOFA 1988, MOFA 1992). JICA also set forth the same policies as MOFA—human resources development (*hito-zukuri*), cooperation through human contact, and fostering people for the task of nation-building (*kuni-zukuri*)—in an almost identical way (JICA 1995:i).[[5]](#endnote-5) Likewise, in papers published in academic journals, the concept of human resources development (*hito-zukuri*) was more emphasized than *genba* (Saito 1992, Hayase 1989).

From the 2000s onward, however, assertions emerged linking *genba-shugi* to the traditional characteristics of Japan’s technical cooperation. In the Diet, MOFA, which had previously used terms such as human resources development (*hito-zukuri*) and nation-building (*kuni-zukuri*), reviewed the previous three decades of technical cooperation projects by JICA as follows, in the context of the revision of the JICA Act.[[6]](#endnote-6)

We think that this technical cooperation represents a classic example of so-called “face-to-face” *genba*-based assistance. Basically speaking, the image of Japanese experts—technical experts—working up a sweat on hand and brow in the *genba* infallibly conveys the Japanese approach to work, as it were: the sense of virtue in all forms of labor and the hardworking attitude of the Japanese people. We regard this as the reason for our outstanding reception in India, for example.[[7]](#endnote-7)

In this statement, the Minister of Foreign Affairs links *genba-shugi* in technical cooperation with the attitudes of the Japanese people, and evaluates both highly.

At around the same time, academic research began to appear citing *genba-shugi* as a traditional feature of Japan’s technical cooperation. For example, Matsuoka (2008), in the context of proposing a new approach incorporating the concept of “capacity development” that had emerged during the 1990s, describes the “great Japanese tradition” of *genba-shugi* as indispensable for the effective function of this approach (Matsuoka 2008:235-236). Other researchers gave *genba-shugi* a similar characterization. Nakahara (2009) identified *genba-shugi* as a characteristic of the development of Japanese systems of industrial education and occupational training, and Japan’s approach to international cooperation. Uotani (2012), in a case study on Ghana, portrayed *genba-shugi* as a special feature of Japanese-style technical cooperation.

These studies present *genba-shugi* as a traditional feature of technical cooperation by Japan, but provide no empirical verification of this claim. Each researcher treats the truth of the idea that “*genba-shugi* is a feature of Japanese technical cooperation” as given. Moreover, the meaning of the term “*genba-shugi*” is different in each study, and there is no common conception of the meaning of *genba-shugi* in the context of technical cooperation. Matsuoka uses the term to refer to the utilization of information from the *genba* in planning. Nakahara uses it to refer to an emphasis on on-site training in the context of industrial education and occupational training, and an emphasis on “people” over systems in Japanese policy in the context of international cooperation. Meanwhile, Uotani uses the term to refer to the physical presence of experts on-site (in the *genba*). In each case, however, *genba-shugi* is characterized as a feature of Japanese technical cooperation, in contrast to development assistance by European countries and the United States, which prioritize concepts and ideals.

During the 2000s, while this idea of *genba-shugi* in technical cooperation was being expounded in Japan, donors in European countries and the United States were endeavoring to change their approach to technical cooperation. This represented a “significant turning point” for Japanese technical cooperation (Miyoshi 2008:133). According to Miyoshi (2008), this was a “turning point” because Japan alone risked being left behind amid the emergence of a new worldwide trend in technical cooperation resulting from changes in European and US donors and the previously mentioned appearance of the concept of “capacity development.” This trend in technical cooperation arose from criticism of the project-based style of technical cooperation observed from the 1990s through the 2000s. Berg and UNDP (1993), a leading example of this type of criticism, cite the example of technical cooperation in Africa in the 1980s, pointing out that the technology that was supposed to have been transferred was not actually used sustainably in the recipient countries. The transfer of technologies that could only be overseen by developed countries and the lack of an appropriate implementation environment for the use of transferred technologies were cited as the main causes of this failure. The focus of criticisms such as those presented by Berg was the attempt at “capacity building” through the transfer of technology and knowledge from developed countries in total disregard for developing countries’ ownership and their existing structures and systems (Matsuoka 2008, Miwa 2008). “Capacity development” was suggested by Fukuda-parr et al. (2002) as a new assistance concept comprehending the impact on systems and societies in developing countries, in view of the issues that had emerged in conventional technical cooperation. Meanwhile, Japan, which perceived its technical cooperation in Asia as a “success,” rejected its inclusion among the developed nations criticized by Berg, Fukuda-parr, and others for disregarding existing structures and systems in developing countries (Matsuoka 2008:227). For example, JICA et al. (2003), in a report over 300 pages long entitled “The Effectiveness and Challenges of Japanese-style International Cooperation,” use specific examples to argue that the criticism of technical cooperation by Fukuda-parr and others does not apply to Japan.[[8]](#endnote-8) The 2000s not only brought discussion of *genba-shugi* in the context of technical cooperation: during this decade, writers also sought to demonstrate Japan’s uniqueness in terms of the characteristics of its technical cooperation in preceding eras.

From the discussion above, it is clear that, in the context of technical cooperation, *genba-shugi* has been used to argue that Japan’s technical cooperation and those who implement it are closer to the situation on the ground (*genba*) than European and US donors, and thus to emphasize Japan's unique development assistance, which, it is argued, has been no less effective than that of Europe and the US in achieving development.

**4. JICA’s pursuit of autonomy from the central government bureaucracy**

Unlike the concepts of *genba-shugi* of engineers and technical cooperation, which were used in the context of contact and comparison with the other, JICA’s *genba-shugi* emerged in a domestic Japanese context.

JICA changed from a special public institution to an independent administrative institution in October 2003. Compared to a special public institution, which is subject to detailed restrictions in terms of budgets and personnel, as an independent administrative institution, JICA was held responsible mainly for its medium-term targets and their evaluation and was largely free to allocate its own budgets and projects. With this change, Sadako Ogata (1927-2019) became the first President of JICA from the private sector. Ogata attempted to reform the organization of JICA. The three pillars of this reform were: (1) *genba-shugi*, (2) guaranteeing human safety, and (3) effectiveness, efficiency, and speed. In this context, (1) *genba-shugi* was translated into English as a “field-oriented approach,” and referred to the delegation of personnel and authority from the Tokyo headquarters to local offices (JICA 2004, JICA 2005).[[9]](#endnote-9)

The reason why JICA adopted this policy of *genba-shugi* can be observed in the events leading up to its establishment. JICA was born in 1974 from the merging of several special public institutions under the auspices of MOFA, primarily the Overseas Technical Cooperation Agency (OTCA) and the Japan Emigration Service (JEMIS). Behind the decision to establish JICA lay tensions between the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF)—both of which proposed the establishment of their own organizations to implement technical cooperation—on one hand, and MOFA and the Ministry of Finance—which hoped for integration—on the other. These tensions escalated into a political battle involving politicians and the financial world, which was eventually settled through the integration of functions in JICA (Araki 1984, Hashimoto 1999, Sato 2021, Numata 1994). Through a process of political compromise, the Act of the Incorporated Administrative Agency-Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA Act) was established which, while making MOFA primarily responsible for JICA, also required the authorization of the Minister of International Trade and Industry for projects to be overseen by MITI and the authorization of the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries for projects to be overseen by MAFF. The government bureaucracy thereafter established systems to supervise and direct JICA’s operations based on this general supervisory power. For example, not only was there an insufficient number of senior vice president posts at JICA to receive the management staff from OTCA and JEMIS but there were also few posts at the level of vice president or section head. All senior vice president posts, including that of the President, were filled by retired public officials, and JICA’s operating sections were made to respond to the government bureaucracy. All section heads were dispatched from departments of the central government (Sugita 1999, Takashima & Miyoshi 2000).

Born against this background, JICA was inevitably subject to aspects of bureaucratic stovepiping, with much of its development assistance carried out on using a sector-by-sector approach. In other words, the supply-side of development assistance—the convenience of the central government bureaucracy—was prioritized over demand-side information from the local areas where the development assistance was to be implemented. JICA’s staff were aware of this issue, emphasizing an approach based on the recipient country and region from the time of JICA’s establishment, and pushing ahead with organizational reforms while simultaneously giving consideration to the central bureaucracy (JICA 2019). They attempted to reform this organization—originally a miscellany of different sections answering to different bureaucracies—into an organization that could formulate assistance plans for each country and region, and implement assistance based on these plans.[[10]](#endnote-10) From the second half of the 1980s, they had also embarked on organizational reform aimed at strengthening local offices, to uncover the needs of local areas (Tajima 1986, Yanagiya 1991, Nakamura 1991).

　The strengthening of local offices continued to be an issue through the 1990s. JICA was subject to external pressure for the decentralization of assistance organizations: in other words, strengthening local personnel and delegating authority to local offices. The OECD (1985) asserted that stronger localization of assistance organizations leads to more effective and efficient assistance. Some countries, such as Canada, even embarked on parliamentary initiatives to reform assistance organizations (OECD 1985, The Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade 1987). Cooperation between assistance donors became commonplace from the second half of the 1900s (Miyoshi 2001), and the increasing importance of local negotiations between donors made it necessary for JICA to again reinforce its local offices. At the same time, however, these efforts to strengthen local offices did not progress without difficulty, due to the internal issues within JICA described below. Japan’s ODA budget increased five-fold from 1978 to 1997. By contrast, however, the number of JICA staff only grew by approximately 20%.[[11]](#endnote-11) Moreover, JICA was unable to transfer staff arbitrarily. At the time JICA was still meticulously controlled by the government bureaucracy. Each section of the bureaucracy, corresponding to each of JICA’s various operating departments, had the ultimate authority to determine JICA’s budget. JICA’s operating departments were therefore required to discuss and negotiate with the central government bureaucracy on issues such as the number of personnel in each section, the number of specialists assigned to each project, the cost of purchasing materials, and even travel expenses incurred by JICA staff. These constraints meant that local offices were unable to take any action without first contacting and checking with the JICA headquarters in Tokyo, making it difficult to respond swiftly and flexibly to any issues.[[12]](#endnote-12)

The systems associated with Japan’s ODA changed dramatically after the beginning of the 21st century. In addition to the decision by the cabinet in September 2001 to convert JICA from a special public institution to an independent administrative institution, Japan’s Official Development Assistance Charter (ODA Charter) was revised around MOFA in September 2003, including the aim of strengthening the function of local offices. Japan’s ODA budget was substantially reduced with the stated aim of improving fiscal health,[[13]](#endnote-13) and even greater efficiency was demanded from development assistance. In response to this political situation, some staff volunteers from within JICA, together with labor unions, carried out questionnaire surveys and other activities to develop a vision for JICA’s ideal form and the ideal leader for the organization as an independent administrative institution. They asserted that the local needs thus revealed were incorporated into their vision for development assistance.[[14]](#endnote-14) Meanwhile, Ogata, who had been an overwhelmingly popular choice among respondents to their survey on the ideal leader, went on to become the President of JICA, leading the organizational reforms described above.

A survey of the literature reveals that the calls for *genba-shugi* reflected in JICA’s organizational reforms originated not only from JICA’s internal staff but also from managerial personnel from MOFA. Tajima (1986), Yanagiya (1991), and Nakamura (1991) are examples of this. At the time when these texts were written, the authors were, respectively, General Manager of JICA’s General Affairs Department, President of JICA, and Senior Vice President of JICA. All were originally appointed from MOFA. For MOFA, with its local diplomatic missions in developing countries, boosting the importance of localization in ODA by advocating *genba-shugi* effectively facilitated the attempt to wrest control from other branches of the central government bureaucracy. The more importance was given to the local context, the more MOFA’s embassies would become the core of Japan’s ODA through their local networks. When ODA budgets shrank during the 2000s, MOFA had no choice but to aim for “efficient” ODA operations through “MOFA leadership,” to continue to achieve the same diplomatic effect as before. For this reason, *genba-shugi* was a crucial concept for MOFA, enabling it to ensure that it kept the initiative and maintained leadership.

From the discussion above, it is clear that the *genba-shugi* that formed one of the three pillars of JICA’s organizational reform was a policy aimed at the decentralization of development assistance by transferring authority, personnel, and budgets from the Tokyo headquarters (the supply side) to local offices (the demand side). At the same time, however, it was also intended to advocate the leadership and initiative of JICA and MOFA themselves. In other words, *genba-shugi* was used to argue, with MOFA and against other branches of the central government bureaucracy, that JICA should be in control of development assistance policies and their implementation because it understood local conditions.

**5. Conclusion**

In this paper, I have described the events and circumstances that gave rise to the use of the concept of *genba-shugi* in three different contexts: business management, technical cooperation, and JICA’s organizational reforms. The concept of *genba-shugi* examined in sections 2 and 3 was used to advocate the superiority and uniqueness of Japanese-style business management in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. These were attributed to close interaction with the *genba* by Japanese companies, engineers, and experts, compared to those of other countries. In section 4, I described the background against which JICA’s career staff and MOFA used the expression *genba-shugi* to argue for their own leadership and initiative and against control by other branches of the central government bureaucracy. These arguments were based on the idea that JICA and MOFA possessed their own networks of local offices and embassies, and would thus be able to implement assistance more effectively and efficiently. Despite these different contexts for the use of *genba-shugi*, they share in common an attempt by people and organizations close to the *genba* to assert their own value.

There were also common characteristics defined in contrast to *genba-shugi*. The European and US engineers, business management, and development assistance, as well as Japan’s centralized bureaucracy, each cited as the antithesis of *genba-shugi* in the arguments examined in this paper, were seen to approach the *genba* based on abstract “theory.” Here, abstract theory refers to logic based on ideals and argument, and the pursuit of efficiency through centralized organizational government. These have been rationalized based on existing authorities such as abstract “models” from developed countries in Europe or the United States, or the interests of the central government bureaucracy. Abstract theory such as this disregards the context of the *genba*. The “theory” of *genba-shugi*, by contrast, aims to achieve justification by other means. The theory of *genba-shugi* appeals to people’s “intuition” by implying strong links to the *genba*, as seen in the contexts of manufacturing technology and development assistance examined in this paper. This intuition is informed by experiences common to us all: “there are some things you just have to be there to understand,” “you’ll never find the solution buried in your own thoughts.” The theory of *genba-shugi* seeks justification from these experiences.

In this way, the uniqueness of the Japanese creation of *genba-shugi* lies in the way that it focuses our attention on the intuition that originates from physical experience, not only in fields such as technology, business management, and development assistance but also in the context of the tendency to pursue “rational justification” and “efficiency” based on abstract “models.”

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1. The word is romanized as “Gemba” in the Cambridge Business Dictionary, but the spelling “Genba” is used throughout this paper. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. According to Yamashita (2010), a search of journal articles held by Japan’s National Diet Library revealed that the use of the term in articles and academic papers increased from the second half of the 1990s, and thence spread to fields such as education, politics, and mass media from the 2000s onwards in particular. From 2005, he indicates a characteristic increase in the number of articles discussing *genba-shugi* as an organizational problem-solving approach. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Based on the database of the Japanese Diet proceedings, the number of times *genba-shugi* was used rapidly increases from the 2000s onwards (7 times from 1985-1989, 31 times from 1990-1999, 245 times from 2000-2009, 429 times from 2010-2019). The same trend can be observed in *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper articles. The term appeared in 31 articles in 2020; in 29 of these, it was used in the context of politics or public administration (the attitudes and ideals of politicians or organizational direction). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. This research by Morikawa (1988) sparked the popularization of the term “*genba-shugi*” (Odaka 2017, Ichihara 2015, Woo 2016). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Statements to the Diet by JICA management up to the year 1995, including statements by Keisuke Arita, (then) President to the Committee on the Budget, March 30, 1985 and March 29, 1986; the statements by Taizo Nakamura, (then) Senior Vice President to the Subcommittee on International Economy and Society, Committee on Foreign Affairs and Comprehensive Security, House of Councilors, May 18, 1987; etc. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Revisions concerning the yen-denominated loans department at the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and integration with JICA. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Statement by (then) Minister of Foreign Affairs Aso at the Diet. Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense, House of Councillors, 165th Plenary Session of the Diet, November 7, 2006. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. It has been argued that JICA (2003) was compiled “for the purpose of presenting JICA's rebuttal” of the assertions presented in Fukuda-parr et al. (Miyoshi 2008:135). [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Specifically, it referred to the transfer of around 20% of JICA staff (200 people) to local offices and the introduction of an overseas project management system under which local offices were made responsible for the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of projects (JICA 2004, JICA 2005). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. A regional section was established under the Operations Strategy Department in 1981. The number of regional sections subsequently grew to three. Four regional departments were born in 1999. New sections were also established from the second half of the 1980s onward to address issues such as new development challenges, environmental issues, WID, and peace-building (Tajima & Miyoshi 2000:132-133). [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. The ODA budgets and numbers of JICA staff were calculated by the author based on MOFA (2021) and JICA (1978 and 1997), respectively. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. From an interview with a former JICA staff member. At the time, authorization was obtained by FAX, requiring even more time than in the present day. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. The general budget declined from its peak (in yen, here indexed as 100) in 1997 to 89.6 in 2000, 73.4 in 2003, and 65.0 in 2006. The budget was reduced by approximately one third over the space of a decade (calculated by the author with reference to MOFA 2021). [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. From an interview with a former JICA staff member. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)