

ABSTRACT

In 1883, Lord William Kelvin conveyed the importance of measurement. Since then, society seemed to have an obsession towards it. This is not to imply that measurement is bad. On the contrary, the act of measuring and the use of good data to represent the standing of otherwise abstract positions are important. Quality gurus use them in their deliberations regarding what constituted 'quality' and what did not. Their intelligent use of the right system of measures has brought tremendous success in the manufacturing industry. Quality assurance that utilises measures and indicators in a fitting fashion has formed the basis of this achievement. With numbers, people acquire a degree of power that gives them back some control over their lives and undertakings. Unfortunately, there is a dangerous tendency for measures and the act of measuring to be taken to the extreme. In over-processing the figures, a totally different picture is portrayed. Likewise, in comparing different entities using numbers, an inaccurate representation of the 'real' condition ensues. Instead of appreciating the complexity of situations, 'indices' that are supposed to 'capture' this complexity are formulated. In the process, the nature of the issue at hand gets distorted, thus rendering the measurement irrelevant. Otherwise experienced policy makers now relegate decision-making responsibility to numbers instead of their own good judgement. To add, resources are focused at the detriment of other important aspects, just to 'look good' as far as the indicators go, and sometimes giving rise to the opposite of what is originally intended. It is a well known fact that numbers and figures that are set unrealistically turn sincere employees into schemers, consuming substantial amount of the employees' time and other resources in the process. Along the way, suspicions and doubts are born, making colleagues turn against each other in an environment of ill-will and distrust. This results in decisions which are not necessarily in the best interest of the organisation. Despite all the numerical controls used and