Preface

Organisations across the globe are in search of excellence in diverse activities. The pressure of circumstances and the newly-emerging challenges in the socio-economic scenario are prompting them to do so. One of the most publicised aspects of the Japanese approach to quality has been the *Quality Circle* (QC). QCs started in Japan in 1962 as another method of improving quality. Ishikawa (1972) has been credited for creating QCs. He, who believes in tapping the creative potential of employees, started the QC movement to give the Japanese industry that extra creative edge. The movement in Japan was coordinated by the Japanese Union of Scientists and Engineers (JUSE). He has translated, integrated and expanded the quality concepts of Deming and Juran into the Japanese system.

The use of QCs has spread beyond Japan, in particular to the Scandinavian countries. QCs have been implemented in a large number of organisations in India and the Quality Circle Forum of India (QCFI) is promoting in a big way the growth of QCs in India. QCs, in vogue, are mostly found in the industrial/business organisations. But the use of QCs to bring about quality improvement in the social sectors, specially in the field of education in general and higher education in particular, has been largely ignored till now. Against this backdrop, the researcher has tried to explore the potential of QCs in enhancing employee involvement so far as the educational administrators are concerned in the field of higher education, particularly in the universities.

Though there is an increasing volume of literature on Quality Management, including Total Quality Management (TQM), there is still not much available literature exclusively on QC. However, the researcher has made an attempt to touch upon and review the existing available literature on QC to the extent possible. The researcher has not yet come across any documented study on QC in the field of higher education in India. This has encouraged the researcher to undertake this type of study, particularly to explore the potential of QC in employee improvement. The researcher
has felt that the outcome of this type of study would contribute substantially to this relatively less-explored area.

The main objective of this study is to appreciate and analyse the perceptions of the officers' in the State Universities (SUs) in Kolkata with respect to the potential of QC in enhancing their involvement. However, in order to achieve the main objective of this study, it is also necessary to get deep into certain specific issues which form the very basis of the main objective. Such issues can better be captured by formulating a number of other objectives of this study. An attempt has been made to gather the perceptions of the said officers by administering a structured questionnaire that has been designed keeping in mind the main and other objectives of the study.

The study is essentially empirical in nature. The researcher decided to cover two very important SUs in Kolkata, i.e., University of Calcutta and Jadavpur University, in order to make the study an intensive and focussed one. The researcher observed that there are three levels of officers (class I, class II and class III). This perceptual study is totally dependent on primary data collected by administering a structured questionnaire among the existing population of the officers in the universities covered in this study. Based on the extensive review of literature and the empirical findings, the researcher tried to come out with some concrete suggestions to effectively appreciate the perceptions of the officers vis-à-vis the potential of QCs in employee involvement and the initial steps to be taken in the SUs in Kolkata in particular and the administrative personnel in the higher educational institutions in general.