Examinations have for a long time been used to determine who continues with education and who does not. Exams are an important selection tool in formal employment. This has made examinations to take a central place in the activities of educational institutions.

In Kenya, national examination results indicate that certain schools consistently perform better than others. This places their students in better positions. In Kenya, national examination results indicate that certain schools consistently perform better than others. This places their students in a better position while competing with others.

This study compared performance of private and public primary schools in Nairobi in the Kenya certificate of primary education (K.C.P.E). Examination results over a period of four years revealed that private schools performed better than the public schools. It was found necessary to investigate the factors responsible of such examination trends.

Factors that are cited in literature as influencing examination performance were compared between the private and public primary schools in Nairobi in order to find out whether there was a difference. This difference could possibly explain the difference in examination performance between the private and the public schools. The study also made an attempt to find out whether there were factors other than those cited in literature that could be responsible for the examination performance differences between private and public primary schools in Nairobi.

A total of 20 schools participated in the study. They were selected using stratified sampling. The subjects of the study were all the teachers and headteachers in the sample schools. A total of 13 headteachers and 360 teachers participated in the study.

Analysis of data was done using frequencies and percentages and findings presented in form of tables.

Research findings revealed that a difference existed between private and public primary schools in Nairobi in terms of resources, quality of teachers and teacher/pupil ratio. There were other factors namely: Selection policies, tuition, pupils' home backgrounds, wastage, commitment and co-operation which were found to have some influence on examination performance of the schools.