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**GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES AND STUDENTS' COMPETENCIES IN  
MBALE MUNICIPALITY SECONDARY  
SCHOOLS, UGANDA  
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**ABSTRACT**

Stakeholders in education across the world continuously strive to ensure that students acquire academic, vocational and socio-personal competencies. It is widely known that there is variation in the level of competencies between individuals and between groups in general. It was therefore imperative to find out students whose competence is below average so they can be assisted and those whose competence is above average so that the status quo can be maintained. It was on this note that this study sought to determine the effectiveness of guidance and counseling services on the development of students' academic and socio-personal competencies in government and private secondary schools in Mbale municipality, Uganda. The specific objectives that guided the study were; to identify the areas of guidance and counseling services offered in Mbale municipality secondary schools, to establish the effect of guidance and counseling services on the development of students' academic competence in government and private secondary schools in Mbale municipality, and to determine the effect of guidance and counseling services on the development of students' socio-personal competence in government and private secondary schools in Mbale municipality. The research was basically quantitative where survey research design was used. Two government and private secondary schools were each randomly selected for the study. Students' questionnaire on the areas of guidance and counseling services, academic competence evaluation scale and socio-personal competence evaluation scale were used to collect data from 379 student respondents who were selected using multistage sampling technique, while interview was conducted for 12 school counselors who were selected purposely and documentary analysis was used to corroborate the findings of the above instruments. Percentages, Pearson correlation and t-test were used to present and analyse the collected data. All tests were based on 0.05 level of significance. Findings of this study showed that similar areas of guidance and counseling services are offered in government and private secondary schools as they had very high positive correlation ( $r=.96$ ). The areas are; academic, socio-personal, vocational, health and spiritual. Furthermore, t-test analysis indicated that there is a significant difference between the effect of guidance and counseling services on students' academic competence in government secondary schools and its effect in private secondary schools ( $t_{cal}= 3.23$ ). Similarly, t-test analysis showed that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of students for the effect of guidance and counseling services on students' socio-personal competence in government secondary schools and the mean score of students in private secondary schools ( $t_{cal}= 7.21$ ). It was recommended that school administrators should ensure the continuous availability of these services to students, counselors in private schools should assist students to develop better study skills and counselors in government schools should assist students to develop more healthy relationship with teachers.

