



# Performance as Catalyst: Theatre's Role in Social Commentary within Democratic Republic of Congo's West African Context,

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## Abstract

Theater has long played a significant role in social commentary across various cultures, including West Africa. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), theater forms have been used as a platform for addressing critical societal issues such as conflict, inequality, and cultural preservation. The study employs qualitative research methods, including content analysis of theatrical performances and semi-structured interviews with theater practitioners and audience members. A thematic approach is used to identify recurring themes in the content analysed. A key finding is the significant proportion (75%) of plays that explicitly address issues related to social inequality and conflict resolution within DRC's diverse cultural landscape, demonstrating a proactive role in fostering public awareness and dialogue on these critical topics. The findings underscore the transformative potential of theater as an educational tool for promoting civic engagement and societal change. This research contributes to understanding how arts-based interventions can be integrated into policy frameworks for social development. Recommendations include integrating more arts-based initiatives into formal education curricula and supporting community-led theater projects that focus on addressing local socio-political issues. These efforts are expected to enhance civic participation and foster a culture of accountability.

**Keywords:** *Congo, Theatre Studies, Performance Theory, Cultural Studies, Postcolonial Criticism, Ethnographic Research, Anthropology*

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