

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Leadership dynamics and the use of ICT in the 2015 #FeesMustFall protests: A comparative analysis of the #WitsFeesMustFall and #UPrising movements

Ubume bobunkokheli nokusetyenziswa kwe-ICT kuqhankqalazo lwe-2015 lwe-#FeesMustFall: Uhlalutyo oluthelekisayo lweentshukumo ze-#WitsFeesMustFall kunye ne-#UPrising kwiYunivesithi yasePitoli

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ABSTRACT

The #FeesMustFall movement is often portrayed as having been a singular movement. However, drawing on participant observation, in-depth interviews, online sources and documents, this article undertakes a comparative analysis between two #FeesMustFall formations: #WitsFeesMustFall at the University of the Witwatersrand and #UPrising at the University of Pretoria. It contends that the 2015 #FeesMustFall protests emerged and functioned through multiple campus-specific hashtags that reflected localised institutional concerns. The article reveals similarities and differences within the two movements through two broad perspectives, the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and organisational leadership dynamics. Drawing from the Resource Mobilisation Theory (RMT), the article reveals the centrality of ICT tools, Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp, in mobilising material and human resources. Furthermore, through an analysis of leadership dynamics, it illustrates how the movements formed, implemented their mandates, fragmented and ultimately dissolved.

KEYWORDS

Fees must fall, social media, student protests, social movements, resource mobilisation, student leaders, South Africa

ISISHWANKATHELO

Intshukumo ye-#FeesMustFall isoloko iboniswa ngokungathi yayiyintshukumo enye emanyeneyo. Nangona kunjalo, kusetyenziswa uqwalaselo lokuthatha inxaxheba,

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udliwano-ndlebe olunzulu, imithombo ye-intanethi kunye namaxwebhu, eli phepha lenza uhlalutyo oluthelekisayo phakathi kweendlela ezimbini ze-#FeesMustFall: i-#WitsFeesMustFall kwiYunivesithi yaseWitwatersrand kunye ne-#UPrising kwiYunivesithi yasePitoli. Eli nqaku liphikisa ngelithi uqhanqalazo lwe-#FeesMustFall lwe-2015 lwavela, kwaye lwasebenza ngee-hashtag ezininzi ezazinxulumene nee khampasi ezithile, ezazibonakalisa iinkxalabo zamaziko athile. Inqaku libonakalisa ukufana, kunye nokwahluka phakathi kwezi ntshukumo zimbini ngokusebenzisa iibono ezimbini ezibanzi, ukusetyenziswa kweTekhnoloji yolwazi noNxibelelwano (ICT) kunye neendlela zobunkokheli bombutho. Lisekelwe kwi-Resource Mobilisation Theory (RMT), eli nqaku libonisa ukubaluleka kwezixhobo ze-ICT, iTwitter, iFacebook kunye neWhatsApp, ekukhuthazeni nasekuhlanganiseni izibonelelo zabantu nezinto eziphathekayo. Ngaphaya koko, ngohlalutyo lweendlela zobunkokheli, libonisa indlela ezi ntshukumo ezasekwa ngayo, ezaphumeza ngayo iminqweno yazo, zahlukana zaza ekugqibeleni zachithakala.

AMAGAMA ANGUNDOQO

Ixabiso lemfundo malehle, amakhasi onxibelelwano, uqhanqalazo lwabafundi, iintshukumo zasekuhlaleni, ukuhlanganiswa kwezibonelelo, iinkokheli zabafundi, uMzantsi Afrika

Introduction

In 2015, South Africa's higher education sector was disrupted by student-led protests under various hashtags, culminating in the emergence of the #FeesMustFall (#FMF) movement. The protests opposed proposed tuition fee increases for the 2016 academic year and were reinforced by broader grievances around transformation, funding, and student accommodation (Naicker, 2016). #FMF became one of the largest student-led political movements in post-apartheid South Africa where students used social media and collective action to pressure the government to halt fee increases and pursue free and decolonised education (Fihlani, 2019; Chinguno et al., 2017).

Since then, various scholars have written on the #FeesMustFall⁴ movement from different vantage points (see Nomvete & Mashayamombe, 2019; Dlakavu, 2017; Habib, 2019; Kenyon & Madlingozi, 2022; Oxlund, 2016; Raghuram et al., 2020). This article expands on this growing scholarship and provides a unique comparative analysis of two #FeesMustFall movements that unfolded at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and the University of Pretoria (UP), namely, #WitsFeesMustFall and #UPrising. It explores how these movements organised, mitigated organisational dynamics relating to leadership, undertook collective action and ultimately how each movement resolved campus specific issues under the national banner of the #FMF. Through this comparison, the article offers insights into the two movements' formations, organisation, their collective actions and internal dynamics as they confronted and dealt with distinct institutional exigencies as well as the proposed tuition fee increases.

4 #FeesMustFall (#FMF)

Literature survey and theoretical framework

Prior to the emergence of the #FeesMustFall, the #WitsFeesMustFall, and the #UPrising, several movements had emerged under different hashtags across South African universities, including #RhodesMustFall at the University of Cape Town (UCT), #DownwithFinancialXenophobia at the University of Pretoria and #OpenStellies at Stellenbosch University (SU) amongst others (Bosch, 2017; Mpatlanyane, 2018; Valela, 2015). However, the #RhodesMustFall movement and subsequent removal of Cecil John Rhodes's statue at UCT signalled the oncoming protests (Oxlund, 2016). Student protests under different hashtags like the #OpenStellies (at Stellenbosch University), #RUOccupying (at Rhodes University), and the #TransformWits (at the University of the Witwatersrand), emerged in response to the #RhodesMustFall in the first and second quarters of 2015 (see Luescher et al., 2017). Students expressed frustration at the slow pace of transformation in terms of teaching staff composition, campus culture, and the colonial nature of the curriculum and its links to the geopolitics of knowledge production. These protests were often characterised by violent skirmishes between students and law enforcement, and damage to public infrastructure (Oxlund, 2016). Social media, especially Twitter (now X), was intensively used to conscientise, and mobilise students to participate.

In the first week of October 2015 then Minister of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) Blade Nzimande confirmed that higher education institution tuition would increase by 8.5% (for the year 2016). This perturbed students (Naicker, 2016). The 8.5% increase was the minimum standard, and institutions could adjust the percentage in accordance with their needs (DHET, 2015). There was an outcry in response to this fee increment from the student body nationally. However, the protest action and student movements did not officially begin until 14 October 2015. In the wake of this announcement, reactionary student protests erupted across public universities under different hashtags. Mainstream media reports suggest that the #FeesMustFall was initiated by the #WitsFeesMustFall and spread to other universities unifying other movements (Malabela, 2016 and Mavunga, 2019). These student movements had similar objectives, rhetoric, protest repertoires, and strategies.

Resource mobilisation theory and student movements

In this comparative article, we draw on Resource Mobilisation Theory (RMT) to provide a conceptual framework for analysing the #WitsFeesMustfall and #UPrising. RMT proposes that social movements pursue their objectives through the strategic deployment of diverse resources and the exploitation of available opportunities for collective action (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Social movement organisations such as #WitsFeesMustfall and #UPrising rely on structure, organisation, establishment of linkages, and support from the broader society to undertake collective action (Buechler, 1993; McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Social movements are not solely an outcome of personal discontent, but changes in group organisation, available resources and political opportunities (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). This is in response to institutionalised power imbalances coupled with resource inequalities within structures in the society, such as the government, triggering a sense of injustice, thus, the need for collective action (Jenkins, 1983).

The RMT also posits that the success of social movements relies on their ability to secure resources and mobilise affected communities and sympathetic bystanders to stand up for the cause at hand (Jenkins, 1983). The mobilisation and collective action are not spontaneous but rational and goal-oriented, directed by present grievances drawing from available options. Such options can be moral and cultural, and can include the material, human, and social organisation and networks to build solidarity well as shared experiences (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Jenkins, 1983; Spier, 2017). The capacity of leadership to mobilise and coordinate participants and strategically deploy tactics against power holders is crucial (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004). Consequently, this article draws from RMT to compare #WitsFeesMustFall and #UPrising, analysing their formation, mobilisation strategies, and organisational structures to elucidate their operational mechanics and integration within the broader #FeesMustFall movement.

Methodology

This study assumed a qualitative comparative research design. The choice of design was guided by the need to provide an analysis between two #FeesMustFall movements: #WitsFeesMustFall and #UPrising (Bryman, 2012; Stake, 2006; Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011). Author 1 and 3 participated in the #UPrising and author 2 in #WitsFeesMustFall.

Sampling and data collection

Written from a participant observation point of view, this article offers an insider account. This is augmented by data collected through fieldnotes captured during the protests, news coverage and social media. The article also draws from 22 semi-structured interviews for which participants were identified through purposive snowball sampling. Student leaders in the two movements were the only participants of interest for the study in question as our interest lay in leadership dynamics in the movements. The interview data formed part of the broader participant observation method used in both case studies to collect the research data. All three authors participated in the movements, where they occupied the positions of student activists and scholars of the movement, simultaneously. Given (2008) shows that the participant observation method is best for studying unstable social phenomena whose meanings are largely unknown at the time of their occurrence.

Positionality and researcher bias

Our involvement as participants in the protests offered vantage experience of the movements. However, writing on the movements in which authors took part creates dilemmas of potential bias, and therefore presents necessary questions around positionality. Our contribution is based on “knowledge production from inside of social movements” to contribute to the discourse on student social movements often dominated by “professional experts” (Choudry, 2018, p. 28). Steps were taken to ensure ethical considerations were accounted for; all participants’ informed consent was attained prior to them being interviewed, and all personal data was anonymised to ensure their privacy.

Findings and discussion: The genesis of #WitsFeesMustFall and #UPrising

The formation of #WitsFeesMustFall

At the University of the Witwatersrand, two events led to the formation of #WitsFeesMustFall in addition to the tuition fee increment announced by the DHET Minister. First, the university's then incoming and outgoing Student Representative Council (SRC) presidents were informed of the university council's intention to increase tuition fees by 10.5% at a meeting held on 2 October 2015. Second, the university council had failed to respond meaningfully to the call to insource outsourced workers. The RMT submits that social movements form when there have been organisational changes and subsequently institutional imbalances (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). The coincidence of the proposed fee increase and the refusal to insource outsourced workers created a favourable political opportunity for the emergence of #WitsFeesMustFall.

Workers and students at Wits had an existing coalition, notably the 'Wits Workers' Solidarity Committee' that was founded in 2011 (Luckett & Mzobe, 2016). This Solidarity Committee would serve as an important form of human resource to strengthen the movement. As such, workers at Wits became directly involved in the students' struggle during the #WitsFeesMustFall protests (Luckett & Mzobe, 2016). The movement deliberately utilised the university's liberal institutional culture as a political opportunity structure, facilitating the mobilisation of human resources through cross-sector alliances between students and staff (Ho, 2022).

The #WitsFeesMustFall emerged from heightened worker and student frustrations directed at the institution. The student protest on looming tuition fees increase began on 14 October 2015. This was after the Student Representative Council had unsuccessfully opposed the tabled fee increments at the level of university's council, thereby presenting a political opportunity. Thus, the protest action grew into a student movement that became known as #WitsFeesMustFall. The movement systematically brought the university's activities to a halt. It was jointly led by the Progressive Youth Alliance (PYA)⁵ and the Economic Freedom Fighters Student Council (EFF SC). However, a majority of the participants in the movement were politically unaffiliated. At the outset, the #WitsFeesMustFall movement predominantly comprised of students from the Faculty of Humanities and expanded to include students and academic staff from other faculties.

The formation of #UPrising

Similarly, on 30 September 2015, University of Pretoria students, led by the SRC, launched the #DownWithFinancialXenophobia protest on proposed 2016 tuition fee increases that would disproportionately affect international students. Although framed around financial exclusion, the protest had limited impact, largely due to UP's generally apolitical student culture and the fact that local students were less directly affected (Nomvete &

5 The Progressive Youth Alliance (PYA) is affiliated to the African National Congress (ANC), and the Economic Freedom Fighters Student Command (EFF SC) is affiliated to the EFF. Both are dominant political parties in South Africa.

Mashayamombe, 2019). The #UPrising was formed by 11 students who referred to themselves as the Tuks 11. These students were from different student political and social formations at UP's Hatfield campus (Nomvete & Mashayamombe, 2019). The failure of the SRC-led #DownWithFinancialXenophobia protest to compel the university's management to halt tuition fee increases equally presented political opportunity that led to the formation of #UPrising. The 11 founding members were from different faculties enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes from across most faculties. The #UPrising started from a secret meeting at the Hatfield campus's botanical area as a session to reflect on the frustrations students were experiencing.

The frustrations were then ventilated on a Twitter handle #UPrising and a Facebook account (Nomvete & Mashayamombe, 2019). Facebook and Twitter would become an important resource for communication, human and resource mobilisation for this movement at different stages, reminiscent of the latter's use in the Arab Spring earlier in the 2010s (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011).

The Tuks 11 combined forces with Grassroots movement which was a manifestation of factions in the South African Students Congress (SASCO) and ANCYL on campus (see Nomvete & Mashayamombe, 2019). The SASCO and the ANCYL had historically dominated the student political space at the University of Pretoria (Nomvete & Mashayamombe, 2019). Thus, they had also begun mobilising against similar issues as the Tuks 11. Despite the differences of political culture between the Tuks 11 and the ANC-aligned student and youth organisations (SASCO and ANCYL), they reached compromise and agreed to function as #UPrising. They also agreed to adopt a non-partisan student movement given the prevailing student culture across UP's campuses. The Tuks 11 and Grassroots's action was consistent with how most successful social movements collaborate and organise themselves. As previously established, the efficacy of a social movement is predicated on its capacity for resource acquisition and participant mobilisation (Buechler, 1993; McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Consequently, the convergence of these two formations facilitated a strategic consolidation, expanding the resource base to ensure that both human capital and material resources were aggregated from a diversified organisational network rather than a solitary entity.

Similarities and differences in formation

Despite their divergent institutional origins, the #WitsFeesMustFall and #UPrising movements exhibited a clear strategic convergence, unified by a shared opposition to the 2016 tuition fee escalations. Institution-specific grievances as well as proposed tuition fee increases forged grievance and sense of injustice that student leaders leveraged and "coordinated available resources" to form respective movements (Edward & McCarthy, 2004). This suggested a ripe political climate and therefore opportunity to broadly challenge the face of South African higher education. Both movements adopted a non-partisan framework as a fundamental strategy, successfully broadening their communal appeal and securing the mass participation critical to their impact.

Nevertheless, some contrasts can be observed between the two movements in that while the #WitsFeesMustFall formed a concrete alliance with Wits workers, this was not the

case with the #UPrising. The demand for an end to outsourcing was, however, included in the #UPrising's memorandum of demands to the university's management. Students and worker alliances became more prominent late 2015, and in 2016 (Nicolson, 2016). The inclusion of ending outsourcing in the 2015 memorandum of demands was contested within #UPrising. The University of Pretoria's EFF Student Command demanded the inclusion of insourcing of all staff, while other leaders resisted, citing potential jurisdictional conflict with organised labour. Institutional political histories dictated #FeesMustFall's local articulation, contrasting Wits' liberalism with UP's conservatism (Maylam, 2024). #WitsFeesMustFall capitalised on worker-student solidarity at its inception, whereas #UPrising's trajectory was constrained by the lack of historical alliances and strategic risk-aversion regarding organised labour at that time. Thus, the two movements' coordination, composition and mobilisation of various resources varied though the main goal was to forge collective action against proposed fees increase.

Notwithstanding the above, it can also be contended that earlier protests on the inadequacy and inefficiency of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) by mostly universities of technology and Historically Black Universities (HBUs), #RhodesMustFall at the University of Cape Town, #RUshutdown at Rhodes University and the #OpenStellies at Stellenbosch University in the early part of 2015 laid the groundwork for the #FeesMustFall movement. This is inclusive of #WitsFeesMustFall and #UPrising. These issues and events constitute ideal opportunities that the two movements amongst others harnessed and exploited, mobilised and utilised available resources and forged collective action.

The role of Information Communication Technologies in the movements

From the genesis until the end of the first wave of #FeesMustFall in 2015, Information Communication Technologies (ICT) like email and social media including, Twitter (X), Facebook (Meta), and WhatsApp by student activists were intensively used. These social media platforms served as an important resource for the movement and were used to recruit, mobilise, organise, and communicate with students and civil society. Giddens (1990) states media play a central role in terms of "time and space compression", this was evident during the #FeesMustFall. In the context of this movement these ICTs and media forms were instrumental in ensuring that movement developments were shared in real time. Therefore, those who wanted to join, show solidarity or raise awareness could do so from anywhere in the world. In the same vein, those who challenged the movement, like university management and the state, had their own use for the ICTs.

Use of social media and ICT at Wits and #WitsFeesMustFall

At Wits, the management used the email system to communicate and to downplay the protests with an aim to discredit the movement to fellow students, staff and external stakeholders (Chinguno et al., 2017). The #WitsFeesMustFall movement directly responded by using the SRC's access to the university's email system and sent counter messaging. However, Wits management later blocked the SRC's access and use of the university's email system. For some students, this took away their access to communication from the SRC which was the only source of verifiable information regarding protest activities. Given this

drawback, the movement shifted focus and intensified the use of social media to counter university narratives to the university community and the public. In addition, the movement used social media to document protest action, provide updates to staff and students and garner solidarity and sympathy.

Furthermore, Wits management utilised mainstream media reports to counteract the student movement to the public. Several mainstream media and news sources published “questionable narratives” (i.e. frames that portrayed students as violent and that their actions could not be justified). The use of mainstream media proved effective for the university. It served to discredit and, therefore weaken public support and sympathy for #WitsFeesMustFall. For instance, some parents discouraged their children from participating in the university movement and the broader #FeesMustFall movement:

Eish, I need to take the call outside, it is my dad, he has been calling me 50 times a day since he saw the news. He asks if I am studying and says I should not toyi toyi, imagine! The news showed them when campus control was pepper-spraying us. Now he thinks it is Sarafina. (Fallist 4)

Use of social media and ICTs at UP and #UPrising

At UP, the #UPrising leaders and activists encountered similar challenges. UP is generally a conservative university with deep Afrikaner traditions. It often deploys intensive monitoring and surveillance on students and university property (Nomvete & Mashayamombe, 2019). In the formation stages of #UPrising, the activists used the SRC’s resources for organisation, coordination and communication. In response, the university attempted to turn off campus Wi-Fi upon realisation that social media was the main mode of communication. Also, The #UPrising movement relied heavily on ICTs because ongoing protests had resulted in management suspending classes. This created an organisational and coordination exigent for student leaders, as students were no longer physically gathered on campus. Consequently, ICTs became a primary channel of communication to coordinate and engage a dispersed student body.

The paradox of social media and ICT use in the two movements

The #WitsFeesMustFall movement banned the presence of supposed biased media reporters from attending and covering the events of the movement. The movement limited interviews only to media houses that were viewed as progressive such as the *Daily Vox*, an online news platform that has a large social media following within the student community. Also, some of the Fallists⁶ in the movement were journalists employed at the *Daily Vox*. The hashtag #WitsFeesMustFall became essential for forming a social media following. The Fallists used this hashtag to communicate and inform students and the public of the movement’s activities through images, videos, audio, and documents as reported in the comments below:

6 ‘Fallist’ is a term that was used by students in the movement to denote their active support of the movement. Students aligned with #WitsFeesMustFall generally referred to themselves as Fallists (Chinguno et al., 2017).

Yah, I do not come to the demonstrations much [chuckles], I still have research and assignments to do, so I'm playing catch up as much as possible. But Twitter keeps me updated, I come to the evening meetings, but I spend the whole day tweeting, liking, and retweeting so I really feel like I'm here ... (Fallist 8)

Conversely, the #UPrising sought out the media as the UP seldomly attracts media attention, unlike Wits. #UPrising activists were of the view that mainstream media gives more coverage to Wits and UCT activities, ignoring other universities. Therefore, they welcomed media coverage to articulate student grievances through #UPrising. In addition to the use of social media platforms, the #UPrising leadership availed themselves for interviews with mainstream media houses and articulated their frustrations at the university and government actions (Nomvete & Mashayamombe, 2019). The #UPrising leadership was not selective on the types of media houses it engaged with in comparison to the #WitsFeesMustFall leadership.

Social media platforms such as Twitter had the most #FeesMustFall activities due to the fast-paced nature of the platform and easy accessibility to students and sympathisers. The activities of both movements were paired with engagement on Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. The latter was mainly used to spread clandestine details to students regarding ongoing plans and strategies in the movements. Our observations suggest that the social media activity of the activists in the movements led to the gathering of large-scale public support and solidarity. The support that the movement received from the public was particularly greater in 2015. The movements received material and emotional support from several stakeholders, including religious leaders and the religious community, some prominent political leaders, alumni, celebrities, and non-profit organisations (NPOs). Confronted by longstanding grievances associated with inadequate funding, the two movements harnessed human social organisation and cultural resources such as internal organisation (i.e. structures and division of labour), alliances with the broader community for support, ICTs and developed tactics and strategies and undertook collective action (Edward & McCarthy, 2004).

#WitsFeesMustFall and #UPrising effectively tapped into ICTs and social media platforms to plan, mobilise and coordinate students and collective action while at the same time communicating counter-narratives to those offered by the respective universities and some media houses. Social media is an important platform for student social movements to recruit, mobilise, organise, and communicate with members and the public (Bosch & Mutsvaio, 2017; Bosch, 2013; Bennet & Segerberg, 2012; Castell, 2012). Castell (2012) avers that social media use is a crucial tool that can impact the ability of social movements to reach wider audiences. Movement leaders' ability to "coordinate and leverage available resources" also led to the success of the collective action (Edward & McCarthy, 2004).

Leadership dynamics

Leadership dynamics and challenges in #WitsFeesMustFall

Morris and Staggenborg (2004, p. 153) aver that social movement success depends on leadership's capacity to inspire commitment, mobilise resources, frame demands, and

influence outcomes. From the beginning, the #WitsFeesMustFall movement was declared a “horizontal movement”, which meant that participating members were equal in terms of decision-making. The movement was non-partisan though it was initiated by the PYA-led Wits SRC (Chinguno et al., 2017). The four major student political formations on campus were the PYA, the EFF SC, and DASO⁷ which formed a coalition. They each had a representative in the movement’s steering committee. This also included other apolitical student interest groups:

Here we are a horizontal movement. We do not have leaders. We are all leaders here. So, all of us have the right to just go to the podium and take the mic and address the crowd because we are all leaders here. (Fallist 10)

Nevertheless, the movement had four prominent faces who publicly stood as its representatives, namely Nompandolo Mkhathshwa, Shaeera Kalla (incoming and outgoing SRC presidents respectively), Mcebo Dlamini and Vuyani Pambo. At first, decisions were made in public student meetings. The setting of the meetings was like that of an imbizo.⁸ It was open to all; any Fallists could make comments and suggestions. For instance, student activists held a sit-in with the university’s Vice-Chancellor (VC), Adam Habib and other members of the university’s management and council to discuss the students’ demands (see Nkosi, 2015 in the *Mail & Guardian*). The #WitsFeesMustFall leadership refused to meet privately with the VC in favour of a public space where everyone could attend and participate:

We are obviously EFF members and that will never change. We started this thing and we are here to make sure that the SRC will not sell us out to Habib. We want all the meetings of the EXCO to be public, and they must not be allowed to meet with the ANC here. We know them. This movement is for the poor we do not want it to be compromised. (Fallist 9)

The cracks in the open leadership style of the movement emerged however, following the major protest march to the Union Buildings on the 23 October 2015 by students from public universities and colleges in South Africa. Student leaders from the ANC-aligned PYA had opposed the march to the Union Buildings and had also held a ‘clandestine’ meeting with ANC officials eroding trust within the movement, hence straining the open leadership style. The former President Jacob Zuma had announced a zero per cent fee increase for the 2016 academic year (Areff, 2015). Disagreements on how to proceed after this announcement further emerged among the Fallists. Some wanted the movement to end to allow for the resumption of the academic programme. Others argued that the movement’s goal for a free, decolonised education and insourcing of workers was still outstanding and equally important. By then, the slogan of the movement had changed to ‘a free-decolonised education for all in our lifetime’ (Chinguno et al., 2017).

In addition, splinter groups emerged out of this chasm. First were those who wanted to completely shut down the movement and became part of a sub-movement called the #OpenWits. The second group supported the continued existence of the movement,

⁷ Democratic Alliance Students Organisation (DASO)

⁸ Imbizo is a Nguni word that means a gathering to share knowledge and debate ideas.

albeit following the guidelines suggested by the university's management. The third group wanted to continue with the struggle until all the demands had been met.

Leadership dynamics and challenges in #UPrising

In contrast to the #WitsFeesMustFall movement, leadership dynamics and challenges emerged from the embryonic stages of the formation of the #UPrising. After #UPrising had started its mobilisation activities and framing demands to gain solidarity and sympathy, the need to create layers of leadership structure emerged due to contestations for power and the potential of the movement being hijacked by competing forces. The #UPrising leadership experienced challenges from individuals aligned to student political formations (mainly, the UP's SASCO and ANCYL branches) who felt entitled to the socio-political turf at UP. These individuals and the organisations they represented had been the face of student politics at the university such as the 'Right to Learn Campaign'. The #UPrising created a new layer of leadership and devolved some of the duties to the Central Planning Committee (CPC):

The meeting I went to was one of those where we had different students coming from different structures who were going to work under a single banner: UPrising Central Planning Committee. These people will always go back to their constituencies and say this is the plan and moving forward; what would you like us to communicate in that meeting . . . The EFF SC group would go to its constituency . . . PYA the same thing . . . (#UPrising CPC 2)

The CPC devised a programme of action in consultation with different constituencies but owned and led the process. The CPC members were drawn from various student political and social formations from campus as indicated. The CPC had 20 members with five from each organisation. The CPC became the driver of the movement; and the contestations emerged along gender and political lines. The CPC had to be non-political. However, the engagement between its members reflected their different ideological orientations. The role of the CPC was to collect mandates from different constituencies, discuss them, and make decisions and plans. One CPC 3 member observed that UP EFF SC CPC members were very resolute and knowledgeable when it came to meetings. This showed that they had had prior discussions with their constituency.

Something that I observed was the discipline of the fighters (UP EFF SC). The fighters were extremely disciplined, you could see they were clearly caucused. So, when they speak on issues, they would speak with one voice, it was clear to us. So, with that, it made their voice very strong and made it very difficult for us to convince them on certain issues and change their position. (#UPrising CPC 3)

The creation of the CPC did not guarantee the elimination of leadership contestations as various student campus-based political formations sought to gain more influence on the direction of #UPrising because it had gained attention and momentum. This was unique and new at UP given its conservative history and institutional culture which tended to muzzle dissenting voices. Outsourcing/insourcing, and the use of Afrikaans language at UP remained contentious issues. The UP EFF SC was not willing to compromise. It resulted

in break-away groups in 2016 as had happened at Wits. Some forces, for instance, would disagree with #UPrising leadership on the routes and destination of protest marches. Choice of routes was negotiated by #UPrising leaders with SAPS⁹ to avoid violent clashes.

Issues of leadership and associated dynamics in the #UPrising and #WitsFeesMustfall depict the centrality of leadership in student movements. The ability to persuade, think strategically, mobilise resources, coordinate and delegate opportunities determines the success or failure of collective action (Morris & Staggenborg, 2004, p. 153).

Conclusion

Using a comparative approach, the article highlights both the distinct and shared dynamics that emerged across the two movements, identifying ICT and organisational leadership as driving forces. The RMT argues that social movements pursue their objectives by strategically drawing on different forms of resources and available opportunities (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Edward & McCarthy, 2004). As such, our analysis revealed the centrality ICT tools, Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp as important resources in the movements. These platforms allowed for communication, mobilising, securing of material resources and galvanizing of public support, sympathy and solidarity. This phenomenon was consistent with events in the Arab Spring in North Africa from late 2010 and through the year 2011 where social media was pivotal to the movement (Cini & Guzman-Concha, 2017; Bellei et al., 2014; Gleason, 2013; Wolfsfeld et al., 2013). Within the different hashtags used in the different university movements and the national unifier hashtag, #FeesMustFall, different agendas which mirrored campus and university-specific issues emerged. Through effective mobilisation of resources such as social media, both movements gained public appeal that resulted in them receiving material support from internal and external stakeholders. For both movements social media also allowed observers to engage in the protest as they liked through sharing content related to the movement.

In terms of leadership dynamics, both movements were non-partisan and yet made up of activists from different student formations. At UP however, problems emerged from the onset, as the space was tightly contested by existing student political figures. It was a different case at Wits up until the march to the Union Buildings. This can be explained by the existing institutional culture that had historically supported collective action and alliances between staff and students at the university. This is an example of how institutional culture shapes the form that student movements take (see Ho, 2022). Finally, this article also showed that although the Fees Must Fall movement dissolved in 2015 after the announcement of the zero per cent fee increase, others in both movements wanted to resolve campus-specific matters. At UP the EFF SC cohort proceeded to #AfrikaansMustFall and #Endoutsourcing. Similarly, at Wits the movement split and some activists fought for re-opening the university; others, a free, decolonised education and #Endoutsourcing. Whilst it is arguable to say #AfrikaansMustFall free and decolonised education (through curriculum reform) were achieved respectively in the two universities, ending outsourcing was achieved in both institutions by the end of the academic year 2016.

9 South African Police Services (SAPS)

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