



Newspaper Coverage of FeesMustFall Students' Protests in Eastern Cape Universities: A Content Analysis of Daily Dispatch

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ABSTRACT The press as the agenda setter in the society should relay accurate information on issues of public interest. This study evaluated the coverage of FeesMustFall students' protests in Eastern Cape Universities in South Africa by Daily Dispatch. The study employed a purposive sampling technique in which data were collected and analyzed through content analysis of Daily Dispatch. The study revealed that 31 stories were reported by the newspaper during the period of the protests, out of which 10 percent were opinions while 90 percent were news stories. About 93.5 percent were reported on the front page while the remaining 6.5 percent were reported on the middle and back pages, respectively. Averagely, the stories were made up of 19 paragraphs, which indicated that the protest was given prominence. Furthermore, the tone of the stories suggested that Daily Dispatch was objective in its reportage of the protests in Eastern-Cape Universities.

INTRODUCTION

Students as stakeholders in the educational sector of the Nation's economy play an important role in steering and shaping higher education through institutional governance mechanisms. Apart from dialogue, peaceful demonstration and protest are the major tools employed by students to press home their demands. However, what is tagged 'peaceful' is fast evolving into 'violence'. The most recent students' protest in South African universities was the Fees-MustFall. The protest was largely marked with violence, disruption of academic activities, looting, closure of institution and loss properties, which had negative impact on the affected universities, investors and the nation.

FeesMustFall protest was preceded by some other protests. For instance, in March 2015, there was RhodesMustFall protest, which focused on the removal of Cecil Rhodes' statue at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. Also, it was

reported that students from the historically black Universities like Cape Peninsula University of Technology, University of Fort Hare and the Tshwane University of Technology have constantly been protesting on fees increase since the independence of South Africa (Mail and Guardian 2016a). Factors responsible for the emergence of FeesMustFall protests includes; poor students' inability to attend University because of fund, elaborate revenue for University manager, government withdrawal from sponsoring higher education and racism (Bozzoli 2015; Ranjeni 2015).

FeesMustFall protests commenced after the announcement made by the minister of higher education on the 19th of September, 2015 that all South African universities fees would be increased by 6 percent in 2016 (eNCA 2015). The announcement led to students' protests in about 16 universities across South Africa. At University of Witwatersr and, students locked down the institution (Rahlaga 2015); at University of Cape Town, protesting students obstructed vehicle from entering the campus by blocking the road with rocks, dustbins, and benches (Petersen 2015); at Rhodes University, students filled the university's administration building protesting; at Cape Peninsula University of Technology, students protested and closed down the campus; at University of Fort Hare, protesting students

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refused to write exams while waiting for university management to attend to their demands on fee upsurges and issues of fraud (Koyana and Kekana 2015), they also ignited bonfires at the gate of the institution and demolished the security offices (eNCA 2015); at Stellenbosch University, protesting students gave a memorandum of grievances to institution management stating their complaints; at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, students obstructed the main streets onto the Summerstrand campuses; and at University of Johannesburg, argument occurred between students and private security guards (Kekana et al. 2015).

These protests did not last for a long time as a result of the quick intervention by the South African Government who declared no fee increase in 2016 (Daily Maverick 2015; Times Live 2015; Onishi 2015). The most significant effect of the 2015 FeesMustFall protests was the President's establishment of a commission of inquiry into higher education and training in January 2016. The commission was to look at the possibility of having a free higher education system in South Africa. Nevertheless, in August 2016, the FeesMustFall protests resumed when the minister of higher education announced the fee arrangements for 2017 (Greg 2016). The minister's pronouncement activated the protests in some of the universities while police were sent to some other institutions in anticipation of protests (Claymore 2016). There was interruption of academic programmes in the University of KwaZuluNatal and Mangosuthu University of Technology (Xola 2016). Also in Butterworth, at the Ibika Campus of Walter Sisulu University and Nelson Mandela drive campus in Mthatha, large numbers of students were reported to storm the town rioting and throwing stones at moving vehicles. Mthatha Police Officers came to the rescue by releasing teargas to dismiss the students (Chabalala 2016; Hendrick 2016), whereas at the University of Witwatersrand, students organized themselves to close down the university permanently (Ngcobo 2016). The department of education calculated the total amount of property damaged in 2015 protests to around R600 million (Rand Daily Mail 2016). Considering the cost of damage by the 2015 protests and the overall negative effects, the then South African President, Jacob Zuma called the minister of fi-

nance to make provision on how there would be no increment in 2017 fees in all South African universities (S'thembile 2016). Later, the minister of higher education restated that no concrete decision had been reached on the 2017 fees increment (SA News 2016). However, it was noted that if corruption could be eradicated from the system, South African Government would be able to pay for all university students from poor family (Pillay 2016). The minister of higher education stated that while the government still engaged stakeholders in discussion on how to cater for the financial assistance of students from poor homes: with annual income of less than R600,000, the universities fees would definitely be increased by 8 percent in 2017. He further stated that each institution's council would have the ultimate verdicts on the fees (Mail and Guardian 2016b). The major effect of the FeesMustFall students' protests was the R17 billion increase in 3 years on the budget of higher education by the South African Government, as well as the proposed 10.9 percent annual increase in the government grant to South African universities (Goba 2016).

Students' protest is not limited to South Africa, it has also been reported in Venezuela (Lugo-Ocando et al. 2015), Chile (Scherman et al. 2015), and the United Kingdom (Cammaerts 2013). The role of media in some of the reported protests have been studied. Lugo-Ocando et al. (2015) examined the relationship between social media, political mobilization and civic engagement in the context of the students' protests in Venezuela in 2014 in a study on Social Media and Virality in the Students' Protests in Venezuela in 2014: Rethinking Engagement and Dialogue in Times of Imitation. Scherman et al. (2015) studied the role of social media in student and environmental protests in Chile. Furthermore, Cammaerts (2013) in his paper on the Mediation of Insurrectionary Symbolic Damage: The 2010 U.K. Student Protests did a content analysis of the 2010 U. K. student protests using four U. K. newspapers. However, the role of the press in the coverage of FeesMustFall protests in South African universities has not been studied. Nonetheless, the press remains the most powerful channel of communication in the country that cut across all publics; its impact is made through the columns of newspapers (Gupta 2006). The press has the

effective force to motivate the people to embrace developmental efforts; this means that the press is an instrument of change and improvement in the society.

It is asserted that the press in every nation performs sacred duties (Virginia et al. 2013). Its functions hinge on its willingness and ability to daily relay information about the happenings in our society to the large heterogeneous audience through the mass communication channels including newspapers. Daily Dispatch (DD) was selected for this study because is a regional newspaper, which covers the study area. It is published in East London, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. Its choice was further motivated by its wide geographical spread and circulation as well as its long-aged operation in the print media.

The agenda setting theory of the press as posit by Daramola (2003) says that “there is a relationship between news coverage and the public perception of the importance of an issue”. In essence, the newspaper is the prime mover in setting the agenda and determining what people talk and think about. Therefore, this study aimed at evaluating the coverage of Fees-Must-Fall students’ protests in Eastern Cape Universities through a content analysis of DD.

Theoretical Framework

This study is premised on the agenda setting theory. The term “agenda setting” came to limelight in the study of McComb and Shaw (1972). They conducted their study on the 1968 United State presidential election where they found out that the press had a major control of voters’ judgement on what the major issues were. They also found out that there was a strong connection between emphasis given by the press on issues and the importance attached to such issues by voters. The proponents of this theory believe that the press either consciously or unconsciously create a certain image of reality to the public. The press bring to our notice events and occurrences on a daily basis ranging from news, sport, crime, documentary, drama among others. They overemphasis some stories while neglecting the others, this makes some media user to perceive such stories as more important (Fourie 2007). Take for instance, the pe-

riod when stories about crime, corruption and AIDS filled the columns of many South African newspapers, many believe that the nation is already decrepit. The attention devoted to a particular news story influences the public perception of the importance of such issue (McQuail 2000: 26). In relation to this study, we evaluated the prominence of FeesMustFall students’ protests stories as reported by DD.

Influence of Media Ownership on Media Content

In the early days of the press, contents were based on news value of fairness, objectivity, truth, and accuracy, but now the focus has shifted to unethical performance like sensational news, advertisements, sponsored news, press economics and press biases (Mukherjee 2015). Studies have established that media ownership is an essential factor in determining media content (Donohue et al. 1985; Zhu et al. 1997; Weaver et al. 2007). The impact of media ownership on media content cannot be over-emphasized. This is corroborated by the media ownership theory postulated by Shoemaker and Reese (1991), which states that media owners, sponsors, and central power holder have power to withhold matters, manipulate issues and deliver the contents that serve the best interest of the individual private owner. Moreover, Shoemaker (1987) discovered that media outlets, supported majorly on “interest” grounds, are more likely to be partial and focus more on owner desires rather than being objective and impartial. Unfortunately, the press has taken on the role of mass propagandist that is used only to serve the interest of the government, wealthy individual or corporate elite (Chomsky 2004).

Media outfits are owned by either the government or private individuals. A study by Djan-kov et al. (2001) reported that the government owned press have less freedom and are controlled both politically and economically. Uche (1989) pointed out that “the influence of government is seen in the unflinching support government media organizations give the government of the day. For instance, government officials do not hesitate to remove anyone in charge who fails to offer unquestioned support. An “erring” official risks being sacked with “immediate

effect” or faces other punishments for such “heinous” acts. Furthermore, the reporters working in government owned press are not expected to report negative news stories or criticize the government because they have a stronger hold on the editorial decision, while the reporter working in the privately-owned press will be aggressive and relentless in reporting all the activities of the government to the public (McManus 1994).

As much as the government is not willing to forgo the control it exercises over the press, the government exerts this control more through wicked laws and decree against both private and public media (Ukonu 2005). More so, government allows defect in these set laws for regulating the media organization purposely to suppress freedom of expression (Okwuchukwu 2014). According to Parenti (1997: 1-3), the following six keys are used by privately owned media to divert contents to favour their interests: suppression by omission: this is when media organization intentionally omit to mention some aspect of an important issue so as to manipulate audience; attacking and destroying the target: in cases of issues that cannot be ignored or omitted, the media outlet will rather attack; labeling: they can also come up with either positive or negative label in order to set the pace for the issue; face-value transmission: at times, when reporting such issues, they can come up with official cover up or lies to the audience; false balancing: this means that when reporting an issue, they give prominence to some aspect over the other; and framing: they can also create an impression or emotion around some certain issues.

Golding and Murdock (2000: 74) pointed out that media owners, to a great length, define the tradition and editorial position of their newspaper organizations. They further stated that this was as a result of increase in press tycoons in the 20th century, which made individuals like Pulitzer and Hearst in the USA and Northcliffe in England to have various newspaper organizations with enormous distribution stations, to serve their political purposes and are also used to tackle people they have problems with. No wonder, Baker (2007) commented that “concentrated media ownership creates the possibility

of an individual decision maker exercising enormous, unequal and hence undemocratic, largely unchecked, potentially irresponsible power”. An example is the case of Silvio Berlusconi who owned three television stations, which he used in support of his political party in the 1994 elections in Italy as these television stations had 40 percent of the Italian audience as their target audience (Graham and Davies 1997: 32).

The press must ensure that they fulfil their role as the fourth estate of government, and to be able to do this, they need to report accurately, timely, and without bias. In relation to this study, the researchers evaluated the objectivity of DD in its coverage of FeesMustFall protests in Eastern Cape Universities so as to ascertain if its ownership has an influence on its role.

METHODOLOGY

This paper adopted a quantitative research method, in which a quantitative content analysis was used to evaluate the extent of coverage of FeesMustFall students’ protests in Eastern Cape Universities (University of Fort Hare, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Rhodes University, and Walter Sisulu University) by DD, and the degree of objectivity of the newspaper. Quantitative data collected through DD content were analyzed using content analysis and findings presented in frequency table and simple percentages.

Purposive sampling technique, a non-probability sampling, was adopted for this study. Purposive sampling enables the researcher to select samples based on his own judgment in order to achieve the specified research objectives (Dudovskiy 2016). In this paper, sampling was based on certain criteria such as period of occurrence of FeesMustFall protest and wide geographical spread as well as circulation of DD. The samples for this paper were purposively selected and they were editions of the newspaper published between October 2015 and December 2016 which contained articles and news on FeesMustFall students’ protests. This was so, because the protest was not a regular occurrence, it only occurred during these periods. The newspaper editions were accessed on SA Media (SABINET) through the University of Fort Hare Libraries (www.ufh.ac.za/library/).

RESULTS

Extent of Coverage of FeesMustFall Protests by DD

The extent of coverage of FeesMustFall protests by DD was measured by the frequency, position and space covered by the stories in the newspaper. Table 1 showed the frequency and category of FeesMustFall stories covered by DD. A total of thirty-one stories (31) were reported on FeesMustFall by DD between 1st October, 2015 and 31st December, 2016. Out of the 31 stories, 90 percent (28) were news stories while only 10 percent (3) were opinions. The higher percentage of news stories may suggest that the protest was news worthy. However, other categories of reporting such as features, editorial and cartoon were not employed by DD in the coverage of FeesMustFall protests.

Table 1: Frequency and category of FeesMustFall stories covered by DD

Category of story	Frequency	Percentage (%)
News	28	90
Opinions	3	10

Table 2 showed the position of FeesMustFall stories in DD. Out of the 31 FeesMustFall stories reported by the newspaper during the period of the protests, 93.5 percent (29) were reported on the front page (Pages 1-7) while the remaining 6.5 percent (2) were reported on the middle page (Pages 8 – 13) and the back page (Pages 14-20), respectively. The presence of majority of the news stories in the front page may suggest that FeesMustFall was given due prominence and prioritized by the newspaper.

Table 2: Position of FeesMustFall stories in DD

Position	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Front page	29	93.5
Middle page	1	3.25
Back page	1	3.25

The space covered by FeesMustFall stories in DD was measured by the number of paragraphs dedicated to the stories. The number of paragraphs, ranged from 5 to 36 and the frequen-

cies are presented in Table 3. Paragraphs range: 11-15 had the highest frequency of 32.3 percent (10) followed by 16-20 paragraphs range with 25.8 percent (8) while paragraphs ranges: 5-10 and 30-36 had the lowest occurrence of 6.45 percent (2), respectively. However, the average space covered by the stories as determined in Table 4 were approximately 19 paragraphs.

Table 3: Frequency table of paragraphs of FeesMustFall stories in DD

Paragraphs interval	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
5 – 10	2	6.45
11-15	10	32.3
16 – 20	8	25.8
21 – 25	5	16.13
26 – 29	4	12.9
30 - 36	2	6.45

Table 4: Average space covered by FeesMustFall stories in DD

Paragraphs interval	Class mark (x)	Frequency (f)	Cumulative frequency	fx
5 – 10	7.5	2	2	15
11-15	13	10	12	130
16 – 20	18	8	20	144
21 – 25	23	5	25	115
26 – 29	27.5	4	29	110
30 - 36	33	2	31	66

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{\sum fx}{n} = \frac{580}{31} \approx 19 \text{ Paragraphs}$$

Where \sum is summation, fx is product of frequency and class mark (midpoint of paragraphs interval) while n is the total number of FeesMustFall stories.

Degree of Objectivity in the Coverage of FeesMustFall Protests by DD

The degree of objectivity of DD was measured by the tone of FeesMustFall stories reported in the newspaper. The tone of FeesMustFall stories covered by DD is presented in Table 5. Out of the 31 stories reported by the newspaper on FeesMustFall, 61 percent (19) were neutral. By neutral, it means all parties including universities, students and government were mentioned in the report and were accorded equal responsibility or the writer did not blame any of

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the parties. About 29 percent (9) of the stories were negative, meaning the writer reported only the wrong doings and errors of the students, government or university management while only 10 percent (3) were positive, in this case, there was no mention of wrong doing of any of the party involved or the report favoured one party against the other.

Table 5: Tone of FeesMustFall stories covered by DD

<i>Tone</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Neutral	19	61
Negative	9	29
Positive	3	10

DISCUSSION

Extent of Coverage of FeesMustFall Protests by DD

The frequency of reportage of a story is one of the four crucial elements that can lead to discussion or opinion in the agenda setting theory (Folarin 1998: 6). Other elements include the level of prominence given to the news story, degree of conflict generated by the news story and the cumulative press/media effect of the news story (Ibid). To measure the extent of coverage of FeesMustFall protests by DD, the researchers analysed the magnitude of the press coverage of the protests by determining the prominence through the frequency of different types of stories (news story, features, editorial, opinion and cartoon), position (front page, middle page and back page) and space covered (paragraphs). The findings from this study suggest that the frequency of reportage of the protests stories in this study may not be enough to set the agenda of what to think about by the society or increase the public’s awareness on FeesMustFall as increased public’s awareness have been attributed to the concept of the agenda setting function of the press (Severin and Tankard 2001: 219). For instance, the high frequency of stories of illegal use of drug on the newspapers in the United State between 1986 and 1989 increased public’s awareness on the issue of drugs which the people perceived as the nation’s most important problem at that time. This was corroborated by Daramola (2003) who

noted that there is a relationship between frequency of news coverage and the public perception of such news as important.

Considering the implications of FeesMustFall protests on South Africa economy and educational system, the press is expected to have dwelt more on the issue by increasing the frequency of reportage per week, using different types of stories such as cartoon, features, opinions, editorial and news as against the findings of this study, where majority (90%) of the stories reported by DD were news while the remaining (10%) were opinions (Table 1). This finding agrees with the work of Okon (2018) who reported that majority of the anti-corruption stories covered by The News/TELL and Sun/Nigerian Chronicle during Obasanjo and Buhari administrations were news stories. However, the study reported the use of other story formats (editorials, features/columns, pictures/drawings/cartoons, letters to the editors and advertorials) in the coverage of anti-corruption stories by the newspapers, which were not adopted in the coverage of FeesMustFall protests by DD. Notwithstanding, stories on FeesMustFall were given prominence by DD as most of the stories 29 (93.5%) were reported on the front page while only 2 (6.5%) stories were reported on the middle and back pages of the newspaper (Table 2). Likewise, with the average of 19 paragraphs dedicated to FeesMustFall stories by the newspaper (Tables 3 and 4), it further showed the importance attached to the issue by the press as the attention devoted to a particular news story influences the public perception of the importance of such issue (McQuail 2005: 426). This finding is agreement with the work of Picard et al. (2014) who measured the prominence of banking and financial news in some European countries by first page presence. The authors observed that banking coverage prominence increased as the first page presence of banking news increased by 74 percent between 2007 and 2008. This is corroborated by Okon (2018) who adduced high prominence to anti-corruption stories by The News/TELL and Sun/Nigerian Chronicle based on placement of their stories on the front/cover and sectional/back pages of the newspapers. However, Ugwuanyi (2018) reported that low prominence was given to stories on rape cases in Nigeria by two newspapers (Daily Sun and

Vanguard) because majority of the stories were on the inside pages (56.7%) of the newspapers while only 13.9 percent of the stories were reported on the front pages. Furthermore, Ekwueme (2017) observed that the coverage of economic recession under Buhari-led administration was not accorded due prominence by Guardian and Vanguard newspapers as most of the stories appeared on the inside pages of both newspapers (Guardian-83% and Vanguard-86%) while only 13 and 10 percent of the stories were reported on the front pages of Guardian and Vanguard, respectively. The prominence given to FeesMustFall students' protests by DD indicates the newsworthiness of the issue and the importance attached to it by the newspaper.

Degree of Objectivity in the Coverage of FeesMustFall Protests by DD

The roles of the press hinge on its willingness and ability to daily relay accurate information about the on-goings in the society to the heterogeneous audience. As an agenda setter of the society, the press should be objective in its reportage of any issue. However, various researchers have different views on objectivity of the press. Some view the concept of objectivity as "truth and reality" (Westerstahl 1983). According to positivist school of thought "one is either objective or one is subjective, to be objective is to say that one is content to present that which is not affected by one's own assessments, that is, the facts. Facts are what can be experienced directly, that which others would be able to know in precisely the same way. To be subjective is to say that one's own assessments (attitudes and values) have influence on knowledge". Glasser (1992: 179) says objectivity is based on the idea of noticeable and available facts a journalist can get. In this study, objectivity was measured by the tone of the stories as is a test of how journalists carry out their roles as a watchdog (Picard et al. 2014). In this study, the authors defined objectivity as "when all parties were mentioned in the stories and were accorded equal responsibility" or "when the writer did not blame any party, group or individual". In other words, objectivity indicates neutrality in the tone of the writer. The definition of objectivity in this study is in accordance with the view

of Yat (2007) which referred to objectivity in journalism tenet as reporting all sides of the same story given by an eye witness or other people present at the scene of event, without any input from the journalist himself.

The objectivity of DD is evident in one of the stories titled "E Cape Campuses on Knife-edge of tension running battles, more arrest" which was reported in the newspaper edition of 19th October, 2016 (MacGregor et al. 2016). The edition reported the activities of the protesting students, who were alleged with malicious destruction of school properties. According to an excerpt from the story "public order police moved in after student allegedly smashed windows and damaged University properties. On Monday night Rhodes University had resembled a war zone as police allegedly ordered students off the streets at gunpoint and fired stun grenades, teargas and pepper spray when they were slow". The activities of the students as well as law enforcement agents were vividly painted in the newspaper edition without taking sides. The effort made by the Vice-chancellor of Rhodes University to address the riot that ensue between the police and the students in order to reinstate peace was also mentioned. It is clear from this story that the newspaper correspondent was not biased in the coverage of the story. Besides, additional eighteen stories on FeesMustFall protests in Eastern Cape Universities were reported with neutral tone, which further corroborated the objectivity of DD. It is therefore, sufficed to suggest that DD was objective in its coverage of the FeesMustFall student's protest stories as the tonality of the coverage indicated that majority of the stories were neutral (61%). This finding is contrary to previous study by Picard et al. (2014) who reported 48 percent neutrality in the tone of banking and financial news coverage between 2007 and 2013 by some newspapers in selected European countries. Likewise, Okon (2018) reported that approximately 27 and 13 percent of the anti-corruption stories published by The News/TELL and Sun/Nigerian Chronicle during Obasanjo and Buhari administrations, respectively were neutral. Furthermore, Ekwueme (2017) observed 27 and 24 percent neutrality in the coverage of economic recession stories by Guradian and Vanguard newspapers, respectively while ma-

majority of the stories were either favourable or unfavourable. The objectivity of DD as observed in this study may in part be linked to its ownership as it is a privately owned media outfit. According to Djankov et al. (2001), government owned press tend to have less freedom and are controlled both politically and economically. However, privately owned media are more likely to be impartial and objective when it comes to the coverage of sensitive issues as FeesMustFall protests in which government is largely involved.

Situating the Coverage of FeesMustFall Students' Protests by DD in the Agenda Setting Theory

The significance of the press hangs on their ability to set the agenda of issues of primacies. It is noteworthy that the media cannot air every news items as a result of time and space constraints. However, the press dwell on issue they perceived as public importance making such news prominent in the society (McCombs and Valenzuela 2007). This role of the press in determining which news the public think and talk about is the agenda setting function of the press (McCombs 2005). More so, the outline and manner a news is covered makes the public to form their views and perception on the news item. The major media effect of any particular story on the public is influencing the way people attribute, opine and act towards such news story. That is the second level of agenda setting. Furthermore, there is a relationship between frequency of news coverage and the public perception of such news as important (Daramola 2003). As a result, the press is the prime mover in setting the territorial agenda: it has a great part in determining what the public think the facts are and what the people talk about. According to Folarin (1998: 6), the following are the four crucial elements that can lead to discussion or opinion in the agenda setting theory: the frequency of a news story; the level of prominence given to the news story; the degree of conflict generated by the news story; and the cumulative press/media effect of the news story.

Considering the foregoing, it is important to situate the coverage of FeesMustFall students' protests by DD in the agenda setting theory. Based on the findings from this study, it is co-

gent to state that the observed frequency of reportage of the stories by the newspaper may not be high enough to set the agenda for public discussion on the issue as only 31 stories were published throughout the period the protest was on. However, this seems to be compensated for by the level of prominence the newspaper gave the protests as majority (29) of the stories were placed on the front page while only two stories were reported in the middle and back pages of the newspaper. The level of prominence given to the stories could also be justified by the average number of paragraphs dedicated to the stories. More so, the newspaper covered the "genesis" of FeesMustFall movement, the protests across universities in the region and provided updates on the underlining factors and the activities of relevant stakeholders especially the government and management of various institutions toward finding a lasting solution to the students' protests.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the coverage of FeesMustFall students' protests in Eastern Cape Universities were given prominence by DD as majority of the stories occupied the front pages of the newspaper editions with adequate number of paragraphs dedicated to the stories. However, the newspaper did not employ other story formats including, editorials, features, pictures/drawings/cartoons, letters to the editors and advertorials in its coverage of the protests. In terms of objectivity, DD seemed to be fair in its coverage of the protests as the reporters were mostly neutral in their tones.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Generally, the press should be more effective in the coverage of issues of national interest like the FeesMustFall protests by giving the issues due prominence through increased frequency of reportage and the use of several story formats. In particular, the management of DD is encouraged to engage the public with their stories by adopting other story formats (features, opinions, editorials, cartoons and advertorials) alongside the news format in the coverage of

vital issues in order to create awareness. More so, the print media should always be objective in their reporting as the public rely on them for accurate information on every issue and as such they will be fulfilling their social and agenda setting responsibility in the society.

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