Weak leadership must fall!

#WeakLeadershipMustFall.
This is the hashtag that we should all now employ. One may think since the #FeesMustFall protests last year that lessons were learnt.
Clearly not. We are once more seeing violent scenes at our universities. Scenes that are not only worrying, but also make one think of the future of academia in South Africa.
Where is the leadership? How about, for once, our politicians and academics at these institutions step up and lead. The suspension of classes is hardly evidence of a landmark decision taken by a leader.
Is what is happening at the universities of Pretoria and Free State an example of higher learning? With no particular, lasting intervention being made we cannot say this is higher learning. Higher learning as we know it is fast eroding. Afrikaans, like all South African indigenous languages, has every right to be afforded its prestige. So are the other nine indigenous languages. By now, after 21 years of democracy, we should already have seen institutions like Stellenbosch University in the Western Cape offering lectures in isiXhosa and courses in seTswana at North West University.
One protest leader at the University of Pretoria said: “It is not just about Afrikaans as a language policy. It is about the total transformation of this institution. As black people we feel excluded even though we are paying.”
This exclusion is felt in many different ways at some of our universities: from apartheid-era names on buildings to inadequate accommodation for those who need it. It includes the ridiculous system whereby a well-paid lecturer’s children can study for free, but the struggling cleaner’s children have to pay because their mother’s job is outsourced.
There is an urgent need to celebrate the cultural heritage of the majority of students at historically white universities. If these universities want to make a meaningful contribution to the country, they need to understand that apartheid symbols cause pain for the majority of students.
But the question must be asked: where is the minister of higher education?
We cannot sit back and watch student organisations fight it out among themselves.
It is not enough for the department of higher education and training just to send out a press release expressing “deep concern”. The time for deep concern is long gone. Now is the time to act.