

KRYSTYNA WOJTCZAK

**Academic degrees and *veniam legendi* in Poland between 1919-1939
(Part I)**

Summary

Between 1919 and 1939, in so called interwar Poland, conferring academic degrees was the exclusive right of state universities and only those named in two laws on universities: one of 1920 and one of 1933. Those acts, however, neither regulated nor ordered the studying order, leaving the regulation of those matters to the Minister of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment, or the universities themselves, in statutes, which had nevertheless had to be endorsed by the same Minister.

Universities conferred two types of academic degrees: a lower one of a *licencjat* (Bachelor), physician, or magister (Master) and a higher one, of a doctor. Both were conferred upon students of a given institution entitled to confer academic degrees. Exceptionally, a lower, and only a lower, degree could be granted to a student of another institution of higher education. This exception was allowed to facilitate obtainment of a lower degree by those who commenced studying for a degree at a university in still partitioned Poland, but were completing studies in an already independent Polish state.

The main courses offered by universities in the interwar Poland included: law, theology and medicine (medical studies, pharmacy, dentistry and veterinary studies), philosophy, agriculture, forestry and technical sciences. Not every *licencjat* degree though, would open the doors to continuous education leading to the completion of a university education with a doctor's degree. The procedures of studying and preparing for a doctorate were strictly followed and specified by the above mentioned minister, usually upon a request of the scientific council of a faculty of the university in question.

This paper presents the solutions adopted in interwar Poland regarding the procedure leading to obtaining an academic degree, which are subsequently analysed and evaluated. At the same time it constitutes a good foundation for determining, upon its basis, whether and if, then to what extent, the currently binding law on higher education has drawn upon the models developed in the Second Republic of Poland 1919–1939, regarding higher education and academic degrees.

Key words: studies – higher and lower academic degrees – interwar Poland