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Summary
of doctoral thesis on the topic:
Polish Higher Education in the Years 1989–2005 in the Context of Systemic Transformation

Poland's post-1989 political transformation was, on the one hand, a significant challenge and, on the other hand, a huge opportunity for all other areas undergoing reform. Analogously, this applied to the higher education sector, for which the process of change was to be the foundation for the development of a modern Poland preparing to enter the 21st century.

The issue of systemic transformation is a keenly chosen topic for researchers. It is especially often taken up in "anniversary" years and on the occasion of various celebrations. Most often, summaries and balance sheets are made to analyze achievements and failures. The last such year, during which many publications on transition issues appeared, was 2019, when we as a country celebrated its thirtieth anniversary.

The issue of transformation is itself universal, so that it can be studied in different contexts and on a variety of levels. In addition to political and systemic transformation, which are most often analyzed by political scientists, historians and lawyers, one can most often find publications on economic transformation, but also social, cultural or even spiritual transformation. Although education and education in the broadest sense have also been eagerly analyzed by researchers in terms of post-1989 changes, higher education, as a separate sector, has been left exclusively to the interested parties themselves, namely academia. As a result, there was a certain gap in the research, because although there were publications on the process of change in this area, they often dealt with a narrow scope of research, i.e. many materials simply contained the reflections, thoughts and demands of the academic community expressed by academics, without looking at the bigger picture.

Understanding the processes taking place and the resulting decisions of political actors required that this issue be addressed from a political science perspective. This was all the more important due to the fact that the reforms of the higher education area undertaken in the 1990s, analogous to the changes undertaken in other areas, created a new political reality from scratch. Such an approach to the research carried out made it possible to create a dissertation on the area of higher education from a holistic point of view, both in terms of time, which covers a period of almost sixteen years of reforms, and also including the point of view of politicians and, on the other hand, the academic community.

The main research objective was to assess the extent to which the transformation of higher education in the context of the post-1989 systemic transition followed a similar pattern. This had a great impact on the timeframe of the research on Polish higher education in the context of the 1989-2005 systemic transformation, which resulted from adherence to one of the more well-known theses in the literature on the subject, that the 1989 systemic transformation ended with Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004. The analysis of reforms in the area of higher education against the background of the ongoing changes within the state system, allowed us to hypothesize that the process of change ran in parallel.

In the case of the field of higher education and science, the issue looked similar - the transformation of this sector closed on August 31, 2005, the end of the provisions of the 1990 Higher Education Act. This regulation no longer corresponded to the requirements of the new European reality, which forced the political and academic circles to work on a new document in line with the new environment and demands. ¹*The Law on Higher Education*, passed on July 27, 2005, had already opened a new transformation of higher education, focused on the implication of the regulations of a country that had just entered the structures of the European Union. It should be noted that the title of this dissertation indicates that the research in the field of higher education was carried out between 1989 and 2005, but due to the nature of the academic calendar, the period up to the end of the 2004/2005 academic year was analyzed, without analyzing the demands, consultations or provisions of the *Law on Higher Education*, because, as previously mentioned, this document opened the process of a European, new transformation of education, unlike the 1990 regulation, which aimed to change the higher education system

¹ Law of July 27, 2005. *Law on higher education*. (Journal of Laws of 2005, No. 164, item 1365).

of the communist regime to a democratic model, in line with the standards and norms of Western countries at the time.

The research problems also included determining what roles were played by the various political actors in the context of higher education, and, on the other hand, what function was played by the academic community. It was also necessary to consider to what extent the academic community was homogeneous in its actions and whether their influence on the various reforms was significant. It was crucial to analyze these questions as to whose participation in the educational reform process was greater - politicians or the academic community. This would also make it possible to unequivocally resolve the extent to which the political class in Poland was involved and interested in activities reforming the field of higher education.

The research problems also included issues from international (external) politics. It was also extremely important to find out how important Poland's accession to the Bologna Process in 1999 was and what consequences this brought. In addition, it was necessary to analyze the issues taken up at specific conferences of government representatives and how they were implemented in the country. Examining the individual provisions adopted at the meetings by the relevant higher education ministers in turn was to make it possible to determine the impact of European regulations on the Polish higher education system.

The delineation of the timeframe of the research on the transformation of higher education in Poland determined the source base by design, but in order to provide a whole perspective of the changes in this area, it was also necessary to go back to earlier documents, studies and other publications.²³First of all, it consisted of legal acts, such as the Constitution and laws and executive regulations, which contained provisions regulating the area of higher education, starting with the laws on higher education during the regime of the People's Republic of Poland, paying particular attention to the liberalizing Higher Education Act of 1982 and the subsequent regulation called "muzzling" by the academic community

² Law of May 4, 1982 on *higher education*. (Journal of Laws of 1982, No. 14 item 113).

³ Act of July 25, 1985, amending the Law on Higher Education. (Journal of Laws of 1985, No. 36, item 167).

in 1985.⁴⁵In the period of Poland's political transformation proper, one of the most important documents was the 1990 Higher Education Act, which was supplemented or amended by the regulation on higher vocational schools, with its amendment leading to the establishment of the PKA. As far as documents were concerned, transcripts were an extremely important source of knowledge, both covering the 1989 Round Table deliberations, as well as meetings of the Sejm and Senate, and parliamentary committees and subcommittees.

The literature directly related to the transformation of higher education turned out to be extremely diverse in terms of both subject matter and form and genre, but its base was not broad. For, on the one hand, there are the previously mentioned legal acts, commentaries, studies, and, on the other hand, articles, interviews, polemics, lectures and reflections contained in the pages of specialized, professional journals such as "Science and Higher Education" or "Academic Forum", which directly addressed the issues of higher education and science. It is also important to point out certain trends that have influenced this dissertation. As hinted at earlier, in terms of the number of publications and other materials on the subject, it should be noted that there is a significant disproportion in this aspect. Compared to the rich and extensive bibliography describing and analyzing events and phenomena since 1999, that is, immediately after Poland's accession to the Bologna Process, there are far fewer titles covering the last decade of the 20th century of Polish higher education. This has led to the creation of many so-called "white spots," i.e. topics and issues that have not been covered and thoroughly investigated to this day. Such a situation in some places may distort the overall picture of the process of change in Polish higher education after 1989. Despite this, in analyzing the transformation of higher education in the first half of the 1990s in Poland, I have used publications by authors such as Stefan Amsterdamski, Ireneusz Białycki, Agnieszka Dziedziczak-Foltyn or Hanna Najduchowska and Elżbieta Wnuk-Lipińska. The wide base of literature on the Bologna Process and Poland's place in European structures from the point of view of higher education made it possible to analyze

⁴ Law of September 12, 1990 *on higher education*. (Journal of Laws of 1990, No. 65, item 385).

⁵ Law of June 26, 1997 *on higher vocational schools*. (Journal of Laws of 1997, No. 96, item 590).

it meticulously. ⁶Such authors as Maria Wójcicka, Andrzej Kraśniewski, Marek Kwiek and Jerzy Woźnicki have contributed to this.

Much richer in titles is the literature on the subject of the systemic transformation process, often also described as "systemic" or „political". The source base is very well equipped with various types of publications that address the issue of systemic transformation from many perspectives. It should also be noted that, in contrast to the materials on education reforms, the process of systemic change was just as readily studied by foreign authors, whose analyses often juxtaposed the course of transformation in Poland to the processes in other countries of the former socialist bloc. Using these sources, too, allowed a broader view of the issue of transformation, from the point of view of a third party who took neither direct nor indirect part in the course of transformation. For the conceptual analysis and the environment of transformation, I drew on the works of Samuel Phillips Huntington and Robert Dahl in many places. ⁷In researching the Polish perspective, the definitions of political scientist Zbigniew Block, publications by Andrzej Antoszewski, Antoni Dudek, Andrzej Garlicki, Tomasz Nałęcz and Jan Szczepański, among others, have been used. Of course, this dissertation also relies on many other publications, which were used to a lesser extent, but were extremely relevant to the results of the research conducted.

The state of research to date has not exhausted the existing possibilities offered by the issue of the transformation of Polish higher education. Researchers have focused on "snippets" of this period, which mostly included single elements in the form of events or analysis of specific components of the education system. There are many publications and materials that deal with small research areas. On the other hand, until now there has been a lack of a holistic view of the connection between the two transformations, i.e. the first - higher education - and the second, broader - political system. For these reasons, the research resulting in this dissertation aimed to present the transformation of higher education against the background of the process of systemic transformation. The correlations taking place were analyzed, as well as the factors that caused the transformational stages of the above-mentioned areas to run in full harmony with each other, both in terms of the temporal and situational aspects.

⁶ See list of bibliographies.

⁷ See list of bibliographies.

In this dissertation, the following research methods were used. Most relevant to the dissertation was the method of document research, which included the legal acts previously mentioned in the literature, as well as transcripts of various commissions, meetings, etc. In accordance with the essence of the method, documents that could pertain to the subject of the study were initially collected and verified, then their selection was carried out, and in the final stage they were subjected to description and interpretation of the relevant facts for the study. This method, through analysis of the transcripts of the 1989 Round Table meetings, made it possible to effectively establish the state of higher education in the late 1980s, and used in the context of parliamentary transcripts of the 1990 debate on the draft law on higher education, made it possible to examine the attitudes and views of individual politicians regarding the proposed reforms. The method of examining the documents also had an equally large part to play in the context of interpreting the laws. This made it possible to carry out a comparative method between specific acts, as in the case of the 1982 Higher Education Law and the subsequent 1985 amendment, which are relevant to the analysis of the transforming higher education sector, compared to the regulations of the transition era.

Another method used in this dissertation is the method of analysis and criticism of the literature (sources), the essence of which is to demonstrate the expediency, a kind of originality and innovative approach to the research issue undertaken. Publications and studies collected in the bibliography, were analyzed and critiqued, thanks to which it was possible to determine what is the then current research on the issue of the transformation of higher education in Poland after 1989, and what are the features, differences, dependencies, similarities, relationships between the various materials on the subject of the study. This research method allowed me to determine what gap in research my work will fill and what degree of novelty it will have. In addition, closely related to it is the comparative method I mentioned earlier, which was applied to such issues as the state of higher education at specific moments, laws, and political decisions, among others. Another technique that is also related to the method of analyzing and critiquing writing is the method of analyzing and critiquing sources. Its application made it possible to determine the motives, factors of the political decision to start the process of transformation of higher education, through which it was possible to arrive at more

detailed conditions, causes and course, in this case - the transformation of higher education in the context of systemic transformation.

The dissertation also employs systemic analysis, particularly in the context of Poland's higher education system. By design, this technique requires the presentation of the various components that make up the system, as well as their interrelationships and mutual influence. This approach was used, among others, in Chapter III, where the discussion of the 1990 draft law included a presentation of the various bodies, institutions and other relevant actors in the higher education sector, as well as a demonstration of their interrelationships and modes of influence.

The structure of this dissertation follows from the methodological assumptions made above, which are the basis for the research conducted. For this reason, it has been divided into four chapters. They present, in turn, the results of research on the transformation of higher education in 1989-2005.

The first chapter (*Political system transformation and the initial situation of Polish higher education in 1989*) was divided into two main parts. The first was devoted to the broadest possible presentation of the concept of transformation on the basis of definitions from a variety of perspectives, i.e. political, historical, economic, social, or cultural. Analyzing it from various perspectives, allowed a smooth transition to a direct attempt to define the concept of systemic transformation, which throughout the dissertation, formed the background for the described and analyzed phenomena, behavior and other events. This expression itself, which was confirmed in the literature, strongly connotes 1989 and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The year 1989 was a symbolic, conventional date, because in some countries entering the path of transformation, the process of change began earlier (e.g., in Poland), and in some only in the 1990s. In order to understand the phenomena and events presented in this work, it was necessary to organize the existing conceptual apparatus related to the area of systemic transformation. In view of the ambiguity of the concepts of "democracy," "democratization," "free market," "pluralism," and "reform," it was necessary to distinguish between them based on the definitions that are most commonly presented in the literature. Besides, a comparative analysis was made of the following three concepts related to systemic change, i.e. "reform," "revolution" and "transformation."

The second part of the chapter shows a historical outline of the development of the higher education sector in the 20th century, starting in 1918, immediately after World War I. The choice of the initial date was made on the basis that it was only after Poland regained its independence after 123 years of partition that a unified higher education sector could be built. It was extremely important to show higher education during the interwar period, since its development was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II in 1939.

To understand the essence of the beginning of the process of political transformation in Poland in 1989, it was necessary to meticulously present and analyze the most important regulations and events, during the period of the People's Republic of Poland regime. Extremely important was the student theme in the context of protests and strikes, which proved that the student community repeatedly showed that, acting together, they could have any impact on reality, despite the oppressiveness of the regime at the time.

From the point of view of the purpose of the research that resulted in this dissertation, some of the most relevant issues are presented in Chapter Two (*Higher Education at the 1989 Round Table*). It was during the Round Table that many landmark agreements were made in most areas, including the field of higher education. In the pages of the chapter, a detailed analysis of the transcripts of the four meetings of the Subgroup on Science, Education and Technological Progress, which operated as part of the Round Table deliberations in February/March 1989, was carried out. The many hours of discussions by the participants in the deliberations, who represented the following three parties: the coalition-government side, the solidarity-opposition side and the trade union side (representing the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions), were examined. The attitudes of the members of the Sub-Committee were analyzed, in particular the leaders of the respective parties, i.e. the then minister Prof. Jacek Fisiak (coalition-government side), the rector of the University of Warsaw in 1980-1982 Prof. Henryk Samsonowicz (solidarity-opposition side) and Dr. Jan Zaciura (trade union side).

The strategies and negotiating techniques of the various factions, as revealed in the course of the meetings, as well as their end results, were analyzed and evaluated. This made it possible to draw conclusions about the real goals and intentions of specific parties, with a particular focus on the coalition-government and solidarity-opposition sides. The statements made by the participants in the deliberations were also analyzed from both

a linguistic and interpretive point of view, arising from a variety of contexts, in order to determine the real intention of the words spoken. Particularly important was the presentation of the various interpretations made by participants in the roundtable subgroup that related to the same concepts. Words and expressions that posed interpretive "problems" included "democracy," "worldview neutrality," "ideology," "autonomy" and "subjectivity."

In addition to the analysis of the linguistic layer, psychology was extremely important. There have already been publications about the strategies, tactics, attitudes and behaviors from a psychological perspective that pertained to the Round Table talks, but the subject of the research was the deliberations of the most well-known teams, i.e. political reform or economic and social policy, as well as all events related both directly and indirectly to the Round Table negotiations. From the perspective of the dissertation, it was important to identify different types of attitudes, behaviors or strategies of individuals in order to make the best possible interpretive analysis of the statements of the Roundtable participants.

Importantly, this dissertation divides the transformation of Poland's higher education sector into two stages. The first was presented in Chapter Three (*Reforms of Polish Higher Education in 1990-1999*), which covered reforms within the national legal system. Undoubtedly, the landmark moment for the field of higher education in Poland was the adoption of the Act of September 12, 1990 *on Higher Education*. The transcripts of the sessions of the Tenth Sejm and the Parliamentary (Sejm and Senate) Committee on Education, Science and Technological Progress, during which discussions took place on the shape and provisions of the new law, were extensively analyzed.

From the perspective of the dissertation, it was necessary to present and analyze the most significant assumptions of the law, which was to function, with various minor changes, for almost 15 years after its adoption. The most important issue, which became emblematic of the 1990 regulation, was the statutory granting and provision of autonomy to universities, which had been limited or nonexistent for many previous years. A novelty, the consequences of which no one anticipated, was the statutory enabling of the establishment of non-state universities. In addition, the process of selecting

the university's authorities and its powers was structured, the main burden of which was to be shifted to collegiate bodies.

Legislation is dealt with by politicians, so it was extremely important to present the academic community's assessment of the implication of regulations, and then - the functioning of regulations in practice. The observations and demands of representatives of the university communities were important because their analysis could send a signal to those in power in which direction Polish higher education should go.

The second stage of the transformation of Polish higher education fell on the so-called period of Poland's direct road to the European Union, which also directly coincided with the simultaneous progressive transformation of the entire state system. Chapter IV (*The external environment of the area of higher education in Poland - the Bologna Process and the road to the European Union*) tells about this period to understand the essence of the Bologna Process, it was necessary to present the strategy of Western European countries concerning the area of higher education and the development of science and the conduct of research. This involved showing the meanings of such concepts as: "knowledge-based economy (GOW)," "European Higher Education Area," or "free market" in the context of science and higher education.

The timing of Poland's accession to the Bologna Initiative and its first stage of functioning, called the working period, were also analyzed. It was extremely important to show the origins and mechanisms of the process, with particular attention to the principle of voluntariness, which guided all signatory states of the Bologna Declaration. It was also necessary to define the goal of the Bologna Process, which the initiators of the process pursued over the following years, while expanding the base of acceding countries year by year.

When examining the transformation of higher education in Poland through an analysis of both the actions of successive governments and the legislature, it had to be concluded that this area did not enjoy any particular involvement from politicians. With the rather low interest of political actors in the field of education and science, the focus of those in power on the field of higher education as a separate area fared even worse.

One emblematic example that allowed this conclusion to be made was the situation described in this paper of the omission of the member "higher education" from the name of

the 1989 Roundtable Subcommittee on Science, Education and Technical Progress. Despite the fact that two full meetings were devoted to discussing the state of the field of higher education at the time, with many digressions occurring during the other meetings, until this fact was brought to the attention of the representative of the solidarity-opposition side, Henryk Samsonowicz, none of the participants in the meeting considered this to be any kind of problematic issue.

Another example to support the thesis that politicians have little interest in higher education, were the conclusions of an analysis of the place of the higher education sector in the state system.⁸ It should have been noted that between 1989 and 2005, it was mainly under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. Significantly, during Jerzy Buzek's government, the Ministry of Science was created in 1999, headed by Andrzej Wiszniewski, but in reality it was an extension of the Scientific Research Committee, which functioned from 1991 to 2004. This meant that despite the fact that the higher education sector should be of particular importance in the development of society, especially in the context of civilization, politicians of the period under review treated it as one of the components of the Polish education system. It seemed that when appointing successive governments over those fifteen years, few policymakers were aware that if Poland wanted to catch up with Western countries in the fields of science, research, development and innovation, the focus had to be on meticulously educating future scientific and research personnel. Ultimately, however, the idea of treating education as a unified entity won out among politicians, with the result that for many years the Ministry of National Education was a kind of "super-ministry." This was argued on the grounds that it was better for the higher education and science sector to be under a large, strong ministry than to be independent, but under the aegis of a weak and small ministry. This situation clearly showed that the state, which was "transforming itself," still had an incomplete or distorted picture of how it functioned in the external conditions around it on some issues. This backwardness was due to the fact that we still, as a state, but also as a society, did not realize that we had entered the path of dynamic changes in almost all areas of life. Few people, were aware that education, science and development were among the most important pillars that should guide a modern

⁸ In its various configurations, for example, in Leszek Miller's government (2001-2004) there was the Ministry of Education and Sports, whose minister was Krystyna Łybacka.

state entering the 21st century. For this reason, higher education and science were not approached as a unique and extremely important field, the area was treated merely as an extension and another stage of education.

However, in defense of this line of thinking, it was important to recall that an indebted country with an equally poor and indebted society had a lot of work to do at the beginning of its journey. From the materials and publications analyzed, it appeared that the area of higher education was not among the priority issues of the Polish governments of the 1990s and the first half of the first decade of the 21st century.

In the context of successive governments, stability was paradoxically the most important thing for the functioning of the new system under the conditions of the systemic transformation and democratization process.⁹ Despite the frequent change of power and accompanying party fragmentation in Poland in the 1990s and the first half of the first decade of the 21st century, all ruling camps and coalitions had very similar views on Poland's place on the European arena or the general direction in which the country should develop. Thanks to its consistently pursued aspirations and reforms, Poland was gaining the trust of Western countries and, consequently, increasing its credibility in the international arena. This had a particularly positive impact in the context of foreign investors' involvement in the Polish market. For entrepreneurs, when looking for investment markets, it is unquestionably fundamental that they be stable. The unambiguous course towards European structures, confirmed by international agreements, allowed Poland to consolidate its position on the European arena.

The analysis of changes in higher education was carried out as early as 1989, since this area was also on the agenda of the Round Table talks. The method used to examine the documents in the context of the transcripts of the meetings of the Subcommittee on Science, Education and Technological Progress proved to be very helpful in drawing conclusions about the 1989 ruling coalition's approach to the then state of the Polish state. Although the subcommittee's deliberations were to deal directly with the area of education in the broadest sense, at the same time it was possible to read or infer in the documents what attitude the authorities had toward any attempts at reform, change or moving toward democracy.

⁹ Up to and including 2005, there have been eleven governments, along with those that received a vote of no confidence or no confidence.

The authorities at the time in no way accepted the idea that the political system might change to such an extent that other groupings not associated with the Polish United Workers' Party would come to power. Although, representatives of the ruling coalition admitted that the state of the state, and in particular the economy, was in very bad shape, which was reflected in all other areas of life, no major reflections related to these issues were shown. Besides, the team's meetings clearly highlighted the problems faced not only by higher education, but also by education in general. An analysis of attitudes and statements in terms of language, but also in terms of interpretation, allows the conclusion to be drawn that during the four meetings of the sub-team a kind of psychological game was being played, both by the hosts - the coalition-government side, as well as by the invitees - the solidarity-opposition side. Those in power deliberately changed the meaning of words for their own use, did not refer to and ignored questions posed by other participants in the deliberations, and even went so far as to make statements such as "please don't disturb us from governing," a statement made by the then Minister of National Education Jacek Fisiak. On the other hand, the solidarity-opposition side pursued its own technique of "surveying the ground" and analyzing how far they could go in terms of demands. In practice, this did not work out in the most favorable way - in many places the opposition participants in the deliberations appeared uncertain, abashed and without faith in concrete changes.

The culmination of talks that began as early as 1989 was the adoption of *the Higher Education Act* on September 12, 1990. It provided for significant changes, including the introduction of the institution of university autonomy, the possibility of establishing non-public universities, the transfer of the center of gravity of power from the one-person authorities of higher education institutions to collegiate bodies, and a broader opening to the active participation of other groups in creating the reality of universities.

An important transformation, which was undoubtedly linked to the process of political transformation, was the change in the nature of the definition of studies and the general concept of higher education. This involved a move away from so-called elitism and even a shift to the massification of studies. ¹⁰American sociologist Martin Trow pointed out that the "massification of higher education" can be spoken of when 15% of young

¹⁰ See more M. Trow, *Second Thoughts on Robbins: A Questions of Size and Shape*, "University Quarterly," March 1964.

people in the high school graduating age group enter college. In the United States, a similar phenomenon occurred immediately after the end of World War II, two decades earlier than in Western European countries. One of the main reasons for the massification of higher education was the statutory enabling of the formation and operation of the non-state college sector. In the 1990s, as the number of universities increased, the number of students grew rapidly, which also had an impact on the upward trend of the enrollment rate. An analysis of ministerial statistics showed that the most popular majors, particularly within the programs offered by non-state universities, were those in the areas of management and marketing. Due to the opening to the Western market, this trend continued for a very long time, as for some time foreign companies investing in Poland were looking for specialists in these very fields. However, at some point, there was an oversaturation of the market when it came to graduates in these fields, because at that time schools were often not forward-thinking in terms of their study programs.

The opening of newer and newer universities, by design, was supposed to bypass barriers related to, among other things, locational exclusion or the lower financial status of prospective students. However, an analysis of the distribution of academic centers on the map of Poland at the end of the 20th century, proved that most of the universities were established in the regions of larger academic centers, which missed the target. Only after the adoption of the 1997 law on higher vocational schools did the trend begin to reverse in favor of residents of smaller towns and villages.

When analyzing the subsequent reforms, it should be recalled that despite the academic community's very rapid pointing out of shortcomings and errors in the 1990 Higher Education Law, the regulation with some minor amendments survived for as long as fifteen years, until 2005. Part of the academic community made attempts to prepare new proposals for draft higher education laws, but to no avail. In fact, as early as two to three years after the 1990 regulation was passed, some of the authorities of individual universities and academics called for work on amending the law to begin as soon as possible, which they expressed in various types of analyzed interviews, surveys or public statements.

However, some issues did not allow us to wait any longer. Specifically, the launch of the sector of higher vocational schools, which had already been raised many times during various discussions, conferences and lectures, which indicated that, especially

in the conditions of non-public universities, the process of the so-called "professionalization" of higher education should have been implemented as soon as possible. Already during the discussion of the form of the 1990 Law on Higher Education, one of the deputies of the Parliamentary Club of the Democratic Left, Marek Bartosik, pointed out that certain provisions implied the first distinctions made between universities due to their dominant profile. Hence, a regulation was put on the table in 1997 that dealt exclusively with the manner of organization, operation and structure of vocational universities (both public and non-public) in Poland. Thus, the division between universities with academic status and universities with professional status officially began to function in the system.

The prospect of further research in the context of the area of higher education transformation is promising. The main concept of their implementation definitely leans towards the study of successive so-called "inter-statutory" periods.¹¹ Such a choice of the subject of research would entail accepting the thesis that each successive law, i.e. *the Higher Education Law* of 2005 or the so-called Law 2.0 of 2018 begins a kind of new transformation of this sector. Certainly, the nature of such a study, despite many similarities, such as a similar duration (13 years), would differ in some respects, because in the perspective of analyzing the period between the 2005 Law and the 2018 Law, it would certainly not be possible to study it in the context of the simultaneous process of a specific political transformation that began in 1989. Alternatively, it would be possible to make a comparative study of the two analyzed "inter-legislative" periods.

Also cited already in the introduction, the gap in research from the period, especially the first half of the 1990s, determines another direction for the analysis of the area of Polish higher education, which could be carried out not only on a politicalological level, but also from many other diverse perspectives, i.e. sociological, economic, cultural, etc.

In conclusion, despite the many successes achieved, the transformation of higher education in Poland was not free of problems. On the one hand, the correlation occurring between the systemic transformation and changes in the field of higher education, confirmed in the work, was a great opportunity for the area. On the other - the reality of the 1990s was not conducive to any major reforms due to economic problems in the form of insufficient

¹¹ We are talking about the Law of July 20, 2018. *Law on higher education and science*. (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1668).

funding, which is essential when it comes to supporting the development of education. There was also a lack of a coherent strategy for the development of higher education, which was repeatedly raised by both academics and politicians.

In summary, although the subject of the study was the period 1989-2005, most of the challenges in this area remain. Conclusions from this analysis indicate the need for further reflection on the direction of reforms and for strengthening cooperation between universities, authorities, as well as the economy.

