

Working Discussion Paper:

European Business Studies in Australia: Friend or foe?

Bruno Mascitelli

Swinburne University of Technology, 24 August 2007

Paper presented to the National Workshop of the Contemporary Europe Research Centre at the University of Melbourne and the Contemporary European Studies Association of Australia, on '**European Studies in Australia – Setting Further Agendas**', at the Contemporary Europe Research Centre, The University of Melbourne 24 August 2007.

Working Discussion Paper:

European Business Studies in Australia: Friend or foe?

Bruno Mascitelli, Swinburne University of Technology, 24 August 2007

Introduction

With limited exceptions the nature, composition and direction of European Studies in Australia is an area of study which has received limited scholarly research and debate. There are evident reasons for this. In part it can be explained by the very “novelty” of the European Union (EU) as an entity. Until the early 1990s, there was little idea of the nature, extent and breadth of European Studies in Australia and was rarely even known as European Studies. The Contemporary European Studies Association of Australia (CESAA) which was established in 1991, aided the initial understanding of European Studies and where they were being offered through the publication of Registers of European Studies in 1993, 1998 and again in 2004 (CESAA 1998 & 2004). While still a little rudimentary and in part fragmentary, these Registers enabled scholars to get an overview of the extent of European Studies in tertiary institutions and more importantly for this paper, in which programs, courses and degrees they were housed in.

But European Studies also received limited scholarly attention because as Murray points out in her paper (2000), in quoting Cram et al (1999), the complexities for EU scholars of defining and indicating European integration studies, and as a consequence researching the question, was rendered difficult by the subject matter which was ever changing (the moving target problem). Furthermore it has been difficult to analyse the European Community and the EU owing to the constant evolving nature of it – to “an often unpredictable end” (Murray 2000, p. 19). One could add that this evolution with little predictability has without doubt continued unabated to this very day and will without doubt continue into the future.

It is not the task of this paper to enter into the debate on the exact nature or definition of the meaning of European Studies, itself a source of discussion. For the purposes of this paper European Studies will be defined as “courses with a central focus on the European Union or European integration” (CESAA Register 1998). As has been

previously acknowledged, “More universities [in Australia], are now teaching a variety of subjects under the rubric of European Studies or related areas than in the 1990s” (CESAA Register 2004, p. 1). While there are more units, courses and degrees which are providing European Studies in Australia it might be argued that this has not necessarily meant a greater profile or integration of European Studies into mainstream tertiary academic studies. One of the tasks of this and other contributions is to seek new ways of enhancing the visibility, profile and importance of these studies within mainstream academic programs within our Universities. However the primary aim of this paper is to examine whether Business Schools and Commerce Faculties, can become vehicles and drivers for the embodiment and enhancement of European Studies more than what have seen hitherto. Or is there concern that in pursuing such a strategy would be detrimental to the growth of European Studies and therefore be more a foe than an ally? In substance the question posed is whether these Business disciplines could become potential repositories, drivers and allies for the body of European Studies or will they continue to be considered as possible “foes”.

Background

The development and evolution of European Studies has been addressed both in workshops as well as in publications. The contribution provided by the publication of the three European Studies Registers (1993, 1998 and 2004) have been instrumental in providing a snapshot reading of the development of European Studies. After the publication of the second register of European Studies (1998) it was observed that in the five years between the first register (produced by CESAA in 1993) and the second the universities were now teaching as variety of subjects under the rubric of European Studies” (CESAA 1998 p. 4). In 1999 CESAA published “Teaching European Studies in Australia: Problems and Prospects”. In this series of papers some important observations were made about the state of European Studies in Australian universities at that time which in large might be equally applicable at the time of writing this short paper. The publication made evident that the political reality that the EU occupied was a position of low importance in Australian relations and Australian priorities. Field one of the key authors of this publication, points out the EU’s low priority continues to be reflected in our universities – even today (1999).

Field also provides us with a reminder on how many European Studies programs were built within University curriculum's. They were constructed on existing languages or history programs within Arts Faculties with very little extension or creativity. These programs were "cobbled together" in traditional Academic style and sought to give the impression that Australia was keeping apace with academic developments and curriculum updates. Moreover Field informs us that these European Studies were at the same time based on a lack of EU expertise in many courses with a strong humanities bias. She observes what passed for European related curriculum often made little or no reference to the European Union (1999).

In a 2001 ABC radio panel discussion on European Studies in Australia, involving prominent Europeanists (Heather Field, Philomena Murray, Marko Pavlyshyn, Alexandar Pavkovic, Elim Papadakis, Peter Morgan and special guest Chris Patten, then EU Commissioner for External Relations, the first question the guests were asked to comment on was why in the field of European Studies "that has undergone an explosion of interest at universities in Europe and in the USA, but is still relatively small here" (ABC Radio 2001). The next question equally relevant to this paper was "Do you think that interdisciplinary courses such as European Studies should be given more attention at Australian Institutions?" In some respects we continue seeking to address these very same questions in this paper and forum.

Australian-EU relations and its impact on European Studies

Before proceeding with a discussion on European Studies it might be pertinent to address the issue of Europe and the European Union in the Australian mindset. It has been amply documented that Australian relations with the European Union are often regarded as being "cool" and certainly unengaging. Murray accorded the Australian approach towards the European Union as one of "collective amnesia" (2005, p. 1). This she hastens to add is reciprocal on both sides of the equation. Even from the trade perspective of the relationship as noted by Tinney, "In Canberra the European Union is seen as "difficult" and its trade policies as "unacceptable" (Tinney 2004, p. 24).

Europe for Australia rarely means continental Europe and, more often than not, is reference to Britain and the British Isles. Moreover as has been acknowledged by

Tinney (2004), "...given the Australia government's frustration with the EU and the priority it accords to improving the business relationships with Asia and the United States rather than Europe" (p. 1). While ignoring the EU has substantially been a bipartisan approach in Australian government and politics, nonetheless the Liberal governments and especially through John Howard has been substantially more confrontational and hostile towards the European Union than the current Labor opposition. Colebatch defined the Howard approach as being "Yet for John Howard and his Ministers, Europe seems to be always the enemy, the bad guy, a punching bag we ought to whack at every opportunity (Colebatch 2007).

Have these cool relations impacted the state of European Studies. The answer to this question can only be an inevitable yes. As evidenced by Field's very poignant research in which she establishes that European studies throughout the 1990s suffered from the overshadowing nature and importance of Asia and certain markets in Asia (1999). In some respects some of the gloss of this wore off after the Asia Crisis in the late 1990s but European Studies never really clawed back its status or importance.

Changes in tertiary education in Australia and its impact on European Studies

Discussing the future direction of European Studies is only made more complex in this period of transition and change in Australia's tertiary education. Between the changes brought on by the implementation of the Melbourne Model, the Research Quality Framework (RQF) as well as a possible change of government in 2007 are all factors which will impinge on how European Studies might be developed. Moreover, the growing role of international enrolments across all tertiary institutions and the stronger institutional appetites towards revenue raising by all universities poses strong and serious concerns about the appreciation of curricula, such as European Studies, which might not be vocational or driven by international student enrolments. Other changes such as the fast growing Postgraduate programs, (also driven by funding models of lucrative revenue raising) provide areas of concern but at the same time opportunities which are relevant for European studies. The greater emphasis on stronger performing research institutions and the financial bonuses provided are all ingredients in the new tertiary world which will necessarily involve European Studies and which will require engagement and action in order to remain relevant and present.

The areas of European Studies, as traditionally conceived, that have actually undergone decline are the areas of languages and specifically here, European languages. The debate about the importance of languages in all curriculums falls on deaf ears both within and without the University managements. Morgan in his recent study (1997) highlights the growing lack of language skills among staff and students contributing to the declining enrolment of students in languages and indirectly in European Studies (Taken from Fields p. 3). In Australian Universities the Go8 (the most prestigious eight universities in Australia) noted the declining number of languages taught by the Go8 universities had dramatically declined. They state “In 1997 there were 66 languages offered at Australian universities. Ten years later, just 29 survive” (Go8, Languages in crisis, p. 4). One of the significant areas of language decline came from the decline of European languages most significantly Portuguese and Russian. Ironically in a study conducted in USA by Turley and Shannon (1999), business students of international marketing considered it important to be able to write and speak in a language other than English. An overwhelming percentage stated that it was desirable to be able to speak and write in a language other than English. The four top languages preferred by the students were the European languages Spanish, French, German and Italian. There is a message in this paradox presented above!

Business Academic Programs: Friend or foe for European Studies?

In its infancy European Studies was clearly primarily seen as one encompassing an entity undergoing political development. Slowly as it unfolded the economic consequences and impact became more prominent. As the European Union developed, and especially after the 1970s when the EU became strongly identified with economic policies and outcomes, its economic quality took on a greater profile. High on the radar screen became the Single Market and the free movement of people, goods, capital etc. Following, came the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) controversy in Australia followed by the momentous move towards the Economic Monetary Union through the Maastricht Criteria adherence in the early 1990s. The unfolding of the European Union continued with the Euro launch in 1998 and the high profile Stability and Growth Pact underpinning the role of a common policy approach towards all member states of the EU with its budget management and the common monetary policy enforced by the European Central Bank. Yet in the area of European Studies many of these political economy developments remained poorly defined and

often without expertise in understanding and analysis. Some programs began altering their European Studies in the light of the evolution of the European Union. Sydney University is a case in point:

European Studies was established in 1993 with the very broad aim of promoting research and teaching in European-related areas of study. In 2006 the European Studies program has changed to reflect the realities of cross-cultural and politico-economic influences, as well as the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of research and teaching. Today the program includes subjects in European Studies (with optional units in Middle Eastern Studies) at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels (Sydney University website accessed 1 August 2007).

What the Sydney University example highlights is also a slow declining presence of “Arts” within our Universities mostly as a result of declining enrolments. The collapsing down of Arts departments and in some cases the complete closure (as we saw with the closure of QUT’s Arts department). The idea of promoting and integrating European Studies through a business curriculum and program is not new in the world although it is somewhat rare in Australia and appears to have little precedent. Moreover it would seem, based on anecdotal evidence, where the two disciplines have merged or collaborated in has in large part being a product of accident rather than design. But in the limited examples it has actually appeared to be an outcome of success for a number of specific reasons.

Like European Studies, “Business disciplines” have also changed over the last decades and in many circumstances have been forced to become more global and “cultural” in an international sense. As a consequence many Business Schools (or Commerce Faculties) have expanded their sub-disciplines to include a stronger presence of sub-disciplines such as International Business which were often not normally offered within University curricula as separate disciplines until the mid-1990s. In some respects the growth of International Business curriculum was a product of the end of the Cold War and obsession with globalisation and growth in world trade, which there clearly was (Wild et al 2006). While the growth of International Business curriculum may have been a by-product of changes in the

world scenario, in the same time span, European Union developments in the 1990s took on equally important and historic mutation, especially in the political economy field.

Almost at the same time that globalisation became the buzz word, within the University environments internationalisation of universities became an equally common term. But the discussion of internationalisation of universities translated in Australian universities mostly signified Australian universities inviting and accommodating international students in Australian universities (AFMLTA 2002). The lucrative market, especially that of Asian markets (China, India, Thailand) provided growth rates of enrolments which Australian universities had not witnessed in decades. The reciprocal internationalisation of Australian students on the other hand was only provided in lip service ignoring the necessity of Australian students engaging and enrolling overseas themselves and this also included Europe.

Business studies throughout Australian universities tend to be conservative in terms of their offer and mix. Business studies are extremely sensitive to the employment market in and in some cases to accreditation requirements (accountants). Many business schools rely heavily on big block offering of programs which do not stray too differently from one another and are often considered to be “cash cows” for their respective universities. In some circumstances Business schools have inherited or as Morgan says “cobbled together” programs which they could not find a home for. It is quite normal to hear Business with Management, or Business with Law or Law with Commerce. Most of these alliances are hardly strategically put together and in many cases are merged for economic or university strategies.

One of the areas which brought European Studies into the view of business studies was some of the excellent business culture studies undertaken by scholars such as Hofstede, Trompanaars, Hall and others. Some of their work was codified in very effective text such as *Business Cultures in Europe* (Randlesome 1991) and *European Business Cultures* (Crane 2000). These approaches provided a bridge between cultural behaviour of certain countries and its importance in understanding how to do business in European markets. Most of these subjects were lodged within Human Resources, Management of International Business disciplines. As these sub-disciplines grew

across many Business Programs, an understanding of the political, cultural and regulatory understanding of the European Union became a necessity. As can be attested by Murray's observation in 2000, in which the direction of European integration studies included that of economic or legal integration. She states that "a dominant approach has been to examine the EC/EU as an economic entity, not surprising given the primarily economic focus of the Common market, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the abolition of trade restrictions" (Murray 2000, p. 20).

In some respects European Integration was a debate often conducted outside the realm of academic involvement. Many economic, business, agriculture discourses between Australia and the European Union were debated between institutional and government agencies and policies rarely engaged academics. Murray, in her 2005 appraisal of Australia and the EU noted that it was the first text on the issue in over 25 years (Murray 2005). In the main the academic profile of engaging on the issue of the European Union and Business saw academia somewhat on the sidelines of this discussion and offering until quite late in the piece. Moreover as was pointed out by Fields, in Australian universities most European Studies was, in the 1990s, being offered in either Faculties of Political Science or in a Law Faculty. Rarely if at all were they offered in a Business or Commerce Faculty. This opens the question as to why not inside a Commerce or Business School or faculty?

Business faculties and European Studies: The Swinburne Case Study

With the growth of International Business there was in some circles the acknowledgement that languages and culture, including European Studies, benefited from its engagement of subjects within its degree of studies on Europe, language and other "non-business units". This argument was well elaborated by Ancilli et al (2004). In effect it turned the argument of the predominance of business curricula on its head by arguing that Business would benefit from diverse curricula like European Studies in its quest to "internationalise". The point is made very firmly by Ancilli et al (2004) when it is said that "our contention is that the study of languages and the ability to understand different cultures are the *conditio sine qua non* for the internationalisation of the curricula of business schools" (p. 93 – emphasis in the original). This turns the argument 360 degrees in which rather than be defensive about the importance of, in

this case, European Studies, it is essential for the internationalisation of business curricula.

Amongst the strategic “pillars” of Australia’s Universities during the late 1990s was a desire to embrace internationalisation. In some situations, such as that of Swinburne University of Technology, its European cultural units and language (Italian in this case) were integrated into the Business Faculty of the University. The change was justified as an attempt to enhance the international focus of the business courses and to provide a fresh and unique focus for cultural and language teaching but it was also a product of “cobbling together” different parts of curriculum and housing them under the one roof in this case a Business faculty. The Swinburne University example in which European Studies became an established segment of the International Business program started as a fortuitous accident of history. These “Arts” units inside a Business Faculty, which evidently seemed out of place, were cleverly turned into an advantage by the academic management of the Faculty of Business. This is a case in point in which Business and Business faculties can be an ally of European Studies. This Swinburne case is well documented by Nolan in her case study document and explanation of the model in the “Teaching European Studies in Australia: Problems and Prospects (1999).

The case made involved a series of units involving languages and culture, meaning European Studies (as can be seen from table 1) which became an integrated curriculum within a double degree structure¹. Swinburne’s ability to attain growing enrolments in its Italian language as well as strong enrolment in its European studies is a testament to this policy and integrated structure (Swinburne enrolment report, Faculty of Business 2007). The model offered at Swinburne University sought to highlight the possible integration of business with culture and languages and the adoption of a cross disciplinary approach. The resultant courses provided access to European cultures and languages for the business disciplines and *vice-versa*.

Table 1 (below) provides the structure and unit offering for students to undertake as an independent Minor in European Studies which they can inset within their normal

¹ The double degree structure is based on a three year plus one year arrangement (equivalent of 32 units) for an allocation of two separate degrees (one in Business and one in Arts).

Business degree. In the case of the International Business degree the student is obliged to undertake an area studies – in this case European studies.

Table 1 – An example of the European Minor Studies within the Business degree

Stage (year) 1 and 2 - Subjects	Stage (year) 3 - Subjects
Post War Italy	International business in the Italian context
Italy and its Language	International Investment and Taxation
Comparative European Politics	Work experience in Europe
The European Union	Central and Eastern Europe
	European Study Tour
	European Union in the Business Context

Source: Author

This integration of culture and language within the Business school was best defined by Ancilli et al (2004). It was described in the following way:

For example, the European Union program interacts closely with the Italian Studies program, each supporting the other. Italy is viewed as the *gateway* to getting to know Europe and European business and SUT has developed strong contacts particularly with Italian authorities and industry links both in Australia and in Italy. In addition, the double degree provides links between the European Union and the Italian business environments, viewed from an Australian perspective. It ensures a complete integration of the EU, Italy and Australia, from the perspective of their economic and cultural systems, into the academic curriculum. The double degree aims to improve students' skills and increase their own resources by providing a competent knowledge of the European Union and its market which aims to develop new relationships between Australia and Europe (Ancilli et al, 2004, p. 98-9).

The model of integrating Business with European Studies can also be turned on its head. Not only can there be a benefit to European Studies but it is also a benefit to Business disciplines such as Management, International Business and Human – all business disciplines which are required to engage internationally. The collapse of the Italian dairy company Parmalat, often referred to as the European Enron, was a case in point in which the geographical context of a issue related to business ethics inevitably required the engagement with European Studies and specifically with European legislation on Corporate Governance.

Conclusion

Australian tertiary education is passing through a moment of great change and uncertainty. Pressures to alter degree structures as well place research at the forefront of tertiary education are becoming a priority for universities. These new challenges are not barriers for the expansion and realignment of European Studies into more strategic arrangements for it to have a greater visibility within the tertiary curriculum. As has been pointed out European Studies is relatively new as a discipline and is a product of existing European related themes within the politics, law and languages department. European Studies was *defacto*, cobbled together from these related disciplines, but it rarely had a separate recognition or a place of its own.

Many of our universities are undergoing their own internal strategic placement of where they wish to be as an offering for prospective students. In times in which interdisciplinary courses and degrees are the norm and as curricula migrate more to generic degrees and programs, there is a corresponding accord that there can be room for European Studies to be an integral part of this cross discipline approach. The growing economic profile of the European Union as an economic and not just a political entity is making Business and Business Faculties more aware of this cross discipline requirement. Moreover there are models of success which can be emulated

The push for Universities to seek to internationalise their programs including their Business degrees is a clearly established practice. The Swinburne example, though partial and based on specific circumstances, is the evidence that alliances with area studies such as European Studies, provides an ideal form in which the Business programs can be internationalised. It also illustrates the feasibility of offering European Studies within mainstream degrees and courses and thereby strengthening the position and profile of European Studies. This provides greater student numbers and allows the offering of a range of European units. The growth of student enrolments in Business degrees and their sub-discipline variations is evident from figures provided by government statistics. This mainstream approach of alliances with Business faculties is an opportunity for proponents of European Studies to seek out new alliances within their University structures and offer new approaches to old worn out Business programs. This model might not be the recipe in every scenario but it is

clear that where there is a certain foresight within Business Faculties about the internationalisation of their programs there will be a greater openness to looking at these solutions. Business faculties in certain scenarios can certainly be an ally for European Studies.

Bibliography

ABC (2001) Debate on the State of European Studies in Australia, accessed 1 August 2007, <http://www2b.abc.net.au/rn/lcurve/forum/>

AFMLTA (2002) – Australian Federation of Modern Language Teacher Associations, “Higher Education at the crossroads: A review of Australian Higher Education, Higher Education Review, Submission 89, June 2002.

Ancilli L., Betta M., Dinelli R., Hougaz L., and Mascitelli B., (2004) The Internationalisation of the Business curriculum through language and culture, Ed. Wankel C and DeFilippi R., Information Age Publishing, Greenwich USA.

CESAA (1998) Register of European Studies in Australia, Compiled by Murray P. and Szlachetko T., (1998), Register of Contemporary European Studies in Australia, Melbourne.

CESAA (2004), Register of European Studies in Australia, Compiled by Murray P., and Wilson R., Register of Contemporary European Studies in Australia, Melbourne.

Colebatch T., (2007) Australia’s climate myths, The Age, 18 June 2007, taken from <http://www.Theage.com.au/news/opinion/australias-climate-myths/2007/06/18/11-820-19> accessed 7 August 2007.

Crane R., (2000) European Business Cultures, Prentice Hall, London

ECSA (2006), Who’s who in European Integration Studies, Almedina.

Field H (1999), Teaching and researching the European Union in Australia: Aims, methods and content, taken from CESAA Review papers from the first CESAA workshop on teaching European Studies, ed. Aleksandar Pavkovic, Catherine Welch and Carolyn O’Brien.

Morgan P., (1997), ARC strategic disciplinary review of research and research training in the Humanities: European studies, unpublished paper, University of Western Australia

Murray P., (2000), European integration studies: the search for synthesis, Contemporary Politics, Vol. 6, Number 1.

Murray P., (2005) Australia and the European Superpower: Engaging with the European Union, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

Randlesome C., (1991) Business Cultures in Europe, Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, UK.

Swinburne University, Faculty of Business and Enterprise enrolment report, (2007).

Sydney University website (2007), <http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/departs/europ-mideast/about/index.shtml>, accessed 1 August 2007

Tinney J., (2004) The steady growth and persistent asymmetry of Australia-EU business, (unpublished paper), Melbourne, Australia.

Wild J., Wild K., and Han J., (2006), International Business: The challenges of globalisation, Pearson Education, USA