Walton, Peter/Haller, Axel/Raffournier, Bernard (Eds.), International Accounting, International Thomson Business Press, London et al. 1998, 465 p., pb., £ 23,99.

The three editors, professors of accounting at the universities of Geneva (Switzerland) and Linz (Austria), have collected contributions by eighteen authors from twelve countries, but important parts of the book were written by the editors. They have put the parts together to form not only a student textbook of international accounting, but also a reference book for all people, interested in financial accounting practises of foreign countries. The editors follow primarily the culturally based so-called country approach in contrast to the issues approach. Because unwritten rules are often essential in understanding the accounting methods used in different countries, it is difficult for a foreigner to understand those habits. Therefore the editors invited some specialists to present the accounting practices of their home countries.

The book can be subdivided into two main parts. The first part starts with a general chapter on country differences and harmonisation efforts (*Haller/Walton*) and a description of the structure and achievements of the International Accounting Standards Committee (IASC) (*Raffournier*). The introduction is followed by 13 chapters dealing with accounting in the world's leading industrial states and some smaller countries like Australia, Belgium, Switzerland and a comparative presentation of accounting in Scandinavia.

To increase comparability between chapters and due to the fact that those standards are often used as a reference point by corporations and academic teachers, the analysis of recognition and measurement rules in each country is structured round the IASC standards.

By dividing measurement practices into "micro based" and "macro based" approaches (p. 23) the editors follow *Nobes'* idea. The first category which relates to pragmatic rules in the Anglo-American countries is represented by reports of accounting in the US (*Meek*), UK (*Walton*) and Australia (*Heazlewood*). Referring to law-based continental regulations the second class is represented by descriptions of financial accounting in Belgium (*Jorissen*), France (*Hoarau*), Germany (*Haller*), Italy (*Zambon*), Spain (*Inchausti*) and Japan (*Sawa*). Accounting in the Netherlands (*van der Tas*), Scandinavia (*Artsberg*) and Switzerland (*Achleitner*) scarcely fit into that scheme. The first part is closed by the history of accounting during the transition from communism to capitalism in Eastern Europe (*Richard*). The country studies show that to a great extent accounting rules of one country are adopted by another one and that accounting in industrial countries is based on a small number of accounting models. Probably, the growing influence of US-GAAP and IAS will bring the national regulations and practices more and more together.

The second part of the book is shorter following more or less the issues approach. It contains as an introduction a comparative analysis of major accounting issues (*Haller*) and a chapter on multinational companies and international capital markets from a corporate finance and controlling point of view (*Bay/Bruns*). In two contributions on foreign currency translation (*Taylor*) and segmental reporting (*Haller*) important current issues are analysed. Different approaches like the closing rate versus the temporal method in the first case as well as different national regulations are compared and discussed in detail. Chapters on audit of multinationals (*Rochat/Walton*) and on the consideration of accounting differences for financial statement analysis (*Raffournier/Walton*) complete the work.

The book is neither the only one nor the first one in the field of international accounting emphasising the country approach. There are e.g. two comprehensive studies of financial accounting in 14 countries – "Transnational Accounting" (1995) edited by *Dieter Ordelbeide* and KPMG – and 12 countries – "European Financial Reporting Series" (12 volumes, 1992/94) edited by *McLeay* and *Archer* – which contain several thousand pages and therefore are not suited to student's work. There are naturally smaller textbooks probably in almost every country written by national authors, such as, for instance, in Germany the book by *Kütting/Weber* "Internationale Bilanzierung" (1994, 325 pages) including reports of financial reporting in six countries outside Germany like USA and Japan. The advantage of the book reviewed here lies in the co-operation of native authors reporting on their own country in a comparative manner with a common point of reference, the IAS. The restriction to 500 pages allows it to be used and to be purchased by students. The text is easy to read for people with a non-English mother tongue. It is to be hoped that it will be widely used outside the English speaking world too.

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