

Casa

Rirea

Editrice

Rivista Italiana
di Ragioneria e di
Economia Aziendale

Fondata
nel
1901

NICOLA D'URSO DIS.

CROCE 15 - ROMA

ISSN 1593-9154

DOI 10.17408/RIREAFC000001022013

La valutazione delle attività di bilancio nel settore pubblico: considerazioni sulla esportabilità dei criteri sviluppati nella letteratura del settore privato

del Prof. FRANCESCO CAPALBO

ABSTRACT: (THE MEASUREMENT OF NON-FINANCIAL ASSETS IN PUBLIC SECTOR FINANCIAL STATEMENTS: INSIGHTS FROM THE LITERATURE ON PRIVATE SECTOR CURRENT VALUES). Cash based accounting systems measure the change of an entity's "financial" wealth over time. Therefore when an asset is purchased, while the corresponding reduction in financial resources is recorded in order to account for the incurred expense, the subsequent change of the asset value over time is seldom accounted for. In those systems, indeed, there is often no requirement at all to recognise amortizations, depreciations or even impairments of assets. With the long awaited transition from cash to accrual based accounting, public sector entities' extend the boundaries of their reporting systems. The object is not just the "financial wealth" but the whole wealth, that is the sum of both financial and non financial assets and liabilities, and the measurement of their overall change overtime is the ultimate result of the accounting process. Measuring the change in the value of assets over time is an essential part of accrual accounting and the measurement of non financial assets tends to be one of the most significant accounting innovations that public sector entities have to deal with upon implementing the transition. Nonetheless, public sector accounting literature has dedicated little attention to an issue that has already proved to be highly controversial. Private sector accounting literature has indeed demonstrated the existence of several possible different bases that can be used to measure the value of accounting assets, each with relevant differences in terms of impact on the measure of income and equity. The present work, after identifying commonality in the concept of assets in public and private sector environments, examines the "exportability" of the main measurement bases developed by the private sector accounting literature: historical cost, replacement cost, deprival value, fair value, present value. Their characteristics are reviewed in light of the most relevant information needs of users of public entities financial statements and this leads to the identification of some pros and some cons for each of them. This work highlights the essential link existing between the choice of any measurement basis and the ultimate purpose assigned to the financial statements that has to report measured values. The purpose, indeed, determines the concept of income and value to be assumed for accounting purposes and this, in turn, affects the relevance of the different available measurement bases. Therefore, up until a sharp and generally accepted choice is made about the ultimate purpose to be assigned to the accrual based financial statements of public sector entities no absolute preference can be expressed for any of the different bases discussed in the paper.

1. Oggetto e finalità del lavoro

Con la diffusione delle teorie di *New Public Management*, alle entità del settore pubblico è stato chiesto di sostituire o integrare il prevalente sistema di contabilità finanziaria con la più completa contabilità economica (ANESSI PESSINA, 2007) ⁽¹⁾. Sotto il profilo squisitamente operativo, una simile sostituzione risulta in un ampliamento dell'ambito della *reporting entity*, il cui oggetto si estende dalla sola ricchezza finanziaria a tutto il patrimonio della *reporting entity*. Le variazioni di valore del patrimonio non finanziario (e.g. attrezzature, immobili, arredi, ecc.) incidono direttamente sul risultato annuale misurato dal conto economico, laddove, in un regime di contabilità finanziaria, vengono sostanzialmente ignorate o tutt'al più registrate in un conto del patrimonio che vive di vita propria e non incide in alcun modo sulla operatività dell'ente. Ne consegue che la principale novità che l'adozione della contabilità economica è in grado di apportare al settore pubblico è la necessità di valutare in via si-

⁽¹⁾ Il livello di implementazione dell'*accrual accounting* non è stato uguale in tutti i paesi. Per una rassegna si rinvia a CAPALBO, 2012.

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