IS E-GOVERNMENT NOT COMPATIBLE WITH OUR CULTURE?
(A Study about Responsiveness of E-Government Administrators in the Case of Public Services)

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ABSTRACT

Since 2003 the government has issued a policy on e-government, but in fact the performance of e-government agencies both at central and local governments can not be perceived by the public. Whereas the application of e-government is meant to shorten the distance between government officials as public servants with the community as public service customer because e-government is the front office for the government public service offices. This study tried to find out how the performance of public services performed through e-government, especially regarding the extent of e-government administrators responsiveness in giving the service for users. Variables in the study are the availability of the contact link, the functionality of the link, and the level of responsiveness of e-government administrators in response to an e-mail. The entire population is e-government website at departments/ministries, provinces, regencies, and cities that have been published on the Internet. The sample for departments and provinces is taken totally, whereas, 25% of sample for regency is taken proportional-randomly. Data collection technique is carried out through participant observation at each site plus an interview with the website administrator. Analysis techniques used are descriptive statistics and descriptive qualitative technique with the data sources taken from interviews. The study found that in developing e-government sites, links contacts as a means of interaction for the user does not get priority to be provided. Site maintenance, especially for regency sites showed poor performance indicated by the number of failed messages sending to those e-mail addresses. The level of responsiveness of e-government administrators are characterized by very low and most of the e-mail sent to them was not replied. This condition is due to the paperless and digital services culture has not been accepted widely, as well as that Indonesian bureaucracy still characterized by a classical public administration paradigm that prioritized the formal legal aspects of public service. The combination of e-leadership and change management will be the main prerequisite in the implementation of e-government in Indonesia. It has implications for recruitment of bureaucracy leaders that should consider both aspects.

Keywords: e-government, e-leadership, change management, responsiveness, public
INTRODUCTION

Along with the development of information and communication technology, human life activities in various sectors are changing. It also influences the public service sector done by the government as the development of information and communication technology leads to e-government-based public services model. E-government allows 24 hours public service access whenever the users are. E-government also allows the public service is not done face-to-face so the service becomes more efficient.

Realizing the great benefits of e-government, the Indonesian government since 2003 has issued a policy on the implementation of e-government by issuing Presidential Instruction No. 3 of 2003. Besides, in 2003 the government through the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology has also issued several guidelines related to the development of e-government addressed to each government agency.

To complement the policy on e-government that has been issued earlier, in 2006 the government established the National Council of Information and Communication Technology (Detiknas). The council established by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono by Presidential Decree. 20/2006 was given the mandate to formulate public policy and strategic direction of national development, through the utilization of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). In addition the Council is also asked to conduct the study in determining the resolution steps of strategic problems that arise in the context of ICT development. (E-Indonesia Magazine, 2007).

Various policies above show that the government has the political will for successful implementation of e-government in Indonesia reaching the regency government level. However, successful implementation of e-government has not been significant. This is indicated by the low ranking of Indonesia in the Global E-Government Readiness as described in the following table.
Tabel 1. Global E-Government Readiness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Global Rank in 2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunei Darussalam</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viet Nam</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timor-Leste</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao, P.D.R</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Global E-Government Readiness 2005 and 2008

This fact is reinforced by study conducted by Rokhman (2008) who found that the application of e-government has not met public expectations due to most sites only displays profile information and news about government agencies as well as the small number sites used as a means of interaction with the user. This study is important as a continuation of the previous ones, and it has never been done in Indonesia context (see Kumorotomo, 2008). It is also important to address the problems deal with the responsiveness of e-government administrators in public service so that it can be valuable inputs for public service.

Based on the background above, this research attempts to analyze the responsiveness of e-government administrators in providing services to the users.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Concept of Service

Service is an act in which someone or some group offered to other groups or people something intangible, and its production relates or does not relate to the physical product. The services offered to consumers contain the following characteristics: (1) "intangibility" (intangible), it means that service has an intangible nature. It can not be tasted nor be seen, nor be heard nor by smelt
before the purchase. For example, the results of the therapy given to a patient in a psychiatrist's office cannot be predicted. (2) "inseparability" (non-separated). It means that in general services are consumed (produced) and was enjoyed at the same time and if someone wants to hand over to the other party, it will remain a part of the service, and this does not apply to physical goods that are produced, placed on the stock and distributed to various retailers and ultimately consumed; (3) "Variability" (varied). It means that the services are subject to change, because the services depend on who serves and where it is served. The buyers will be careful of this diversity and they often talk with others before choosing a service provider (Kottler, 1997).

The Definition of E-Government

The definition of e-government has been often raised by the experts. Among them is O'Donnell (2003:24) who defines e-government as: "The use by public bodies of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to deliver information and / or services to citizens, external organizations, elected representatives and other stakeholders in such way as to complement, replace or improve existing delivery systems. Another definition disampikan by the World Bank (2001), where e-government is defined as: "to the use of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) by governments as applied to the full range of government functions.

Further, variations on the definition of e-government have been compiled by Rokhman (2008) with the following results.

- E-government applies concepts of electronic commerce (eg information and marketing through Web sites, selling to customers on-line) to government operations.
- Refers to the federal government’s use of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) to exchange information and services with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government.
- Electronic government services over the Internet (eg application forms, driving licenses, etc.).
- The range of electronic services that enable transactions with the Government or electronic voting or improved interactive communication
between the Government and the citizen.

- The term (in all its uses) is generally agreed to derive from "electronic government" which introduces the notion and practicalities of electronic technology into the various dimensions and ramifications of government.

**The Benefits of E-Government**

Implementation of e-government is one effort to improve the quality of public services. The paradigm of government services characterized by a slow bureaucracy service, complicated procedures, and no certainty for any efforts, are overcome through the application of e-government. The paradigm of public service shifts from bureaucratic paradigm to e-government that promotes efficiency, transparency, and flexibility which prioritizes users’ satisfaction as the final results. With this paradigm shift, it is hoped that the government change the orientation from bureaucratic services to a more flexible and customer satisfaction oriented service.

Services through e-government can also change the organizational processes, management principles, leadership style, internal and external communications, the way to delivery services, and the principles of service delivery. This paradigm shift has been reviewed by Alfred (2002:434), which can be presented in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Government Paradigm shift</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orientation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Production cost-effiicence</td>
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<td><strong>Process organization</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Management principle</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Leadership style</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Internal communication</strong></td>
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<td>-------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>External communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mode of service delivery</td>
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<td>Principle of service delivery</td>
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</table>

**RESEARCH METHOD**

This research uses descriptive quantitative approach and qualitative approach with the focus on the sites of e-government at departments/ministries, provinces, and regencies that have final domain name of go.id. For province and department category, a total sample of 71 sites is taken. Meanwhile, for regency category, a 25% of sample is taken random-proportionally. From the total number of 457 districts, 115 districts are taken as samples. But after accessing those regency sites for many times, the researcher found that not all of those sites can be accessed so that the sample of regency sites in this study comprises 90 sites. While a purposive technique is used to select the informants in order to obtain qualitative data based on their responses given through e-mail as the evidence of their responsiveness.

This study uses a single variable. It is the level of responsiveness of e-government sites administrators to serve users, by using the following indicators: (1) Availability of contact link. It refers to menu facilities provided for users to contact the site administrator both via email and available applications, (2) Functionality of contact link. It refers to proper function of provided contact links marked with sent messages, (3) Speed of response to users’ email. It refers to the extent of the site administrators to reply the users’ message.

Data analysis technique used is descriptive in the form of statistical frequency distribution. Then the data derived from interviews are analyzed by using interactive techniques (Miles and Huberman, 1984).
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative Findings

The variable of contact link availability. Of 38 analyzed departments/ministries sites, not all sites provide facilities for users to contact the administrator of e-government through e-mail or contact link. There were 33 (86.6%) sites that provide links contact, while five (5) sites (13.2%) could not be contacted by users because they do not provide it. Provincial government website is worse. Of 33 analyzed sites, after a visit to those sites done, the researcher found only 11 sites (33.3%) which provide a contact link, and the other 22 (66.7%) provincial sites did not provide it.

Similar situation is also found on the regency website. Of the 90 sites taken as sample, only 46 sites that provide links contacts (51.1%) while 44 sites (48.9%) did not provide it. This situation shows that the development of e-government both at the central and local governments has not fully considered about the means of interaction for its users. The developed E-Government is only for one-way communication from the government to the public. Indeed, the link is very important as the evidence that the e-government administrators are ready to interact or are ready to serve users wherever and whenever they are.

The functionality of contact link. Of the 33 e-mail sent to the department/ministry site administrators, 3 (three) emails (9.1%) can not be sent, indicated by a provider's notification that the e-mail address can not be found or is inactive. While the other 30 (90.9%) emails had a good delivery. At the provincial government sites, from 11 sending an e-mail only 7 (seven) e-mail (36.4%) successfully sent, the rest of 4 (four) e-mail (36.4%) was not sent. As for the regency government sites, the failure of e-mail delivery shows the greatest number. Of 90 e-mail sent only 23 e-mail (25.6%) which can be sent and the other 67 e-mail (74.4%) are failed.

Speed of response to e-mail users. Despite the notification that the e-mail has been sent but not all e-mails received a reply from the administrator of e-government. Of the 33 e-mail successfully delivered to the department website,
only 3 (three) sites give reply (9.1%), the other 30 e-mail (90.9%) did not get a reply. For Provincial governments sites, of 11 e-mail that was successfully sent, only 1 (one) that got a reply (9.1%), while the rest (90.9%) did not respond to e-mail. Whereas, for regency e-government, from 23 successfully sent emails only five (5) e-mail or 21.75% got replies, while the other 18 emails (78.7%) did not get replies.

**Qualitative Findings**

The qualitative results described above shows that the level of responsiveness of the site administrator of e-government in Indonesia is very low, therefore the researcher tried to dig deeper information to answer why these things can happen. Questions asked, among others are: Why don’t they reply the e-mail?; Whether the e-government is not in accordance with Indonesian culture?

Why the site administrators did not reply e-mail? From several informants’ answers it can be concluded that they did not reply users’ e-mail mostly due to the lack of human resources and cultural factors. Lack of specialized personnel who are assigned to handle the e-mail indicated that there is no commitment to provide Paperless public services model. This is because of the assumption that opening e-mails is not important, or in other words the service via e-mail is not required. Moreover, cultural factors are the other problems. People are not used to open e-mails every day as part of their daily work. As the consequence many e-mails are not maintained and even their passwords are forgotten, therefore, the mailbox can not save the incoming e-mails. Consequently, many e-mails are not sent successfully as the researcher’s experience in conducting this research.

Is e-government not compatible with Indonesian culture? Based on the informants’ answers it can be concluded that most of informants admitted that e-government is a new culture for our people as the consequence of the development of information and communication technology. This new culture is a challenge and an opportunity for Indonesia government because it is hoped that the application of e-government will contribute to a better, efficient, transparent, and accountable public services. Positive values in the public service has become
an opportunity for improving the quality of public services which is recently considered low and needs to be improved. However, e-government implementation faces less supportive cultural challenges which are still practiced in both daily life and in the bureaucracy culture. *Ewuh-pakewuh* culture (being not open to others) will face transparency culture offered by the e-government.

**Discussion**

Based on quantitative and qualitative findings it can be known that e-government response administrators in Indonesia showed a very low level. Whereas bureaucracy as a public service is now required for conducting a better customer satisfaction oriented service. As stated by Alfred (2002:437) related to external communication, e-government should: be able to eliminate the centralized service, put forward the formal aspects and from limited channels into a flexible service on formal and informal basis, conduct direct and fast feedback as well as providing various service channels.

The results of this study also showed that the state administration paradigm in Indonesia is still adhered to the classic paradigm that characterized by the whole affair which should be based on a formal legal approach. Service via e-mail is still considered as the secondary because it is not the major task and function (*Tupoksi*). Moreover, e-mail is considered as non-classic bureaucratic culture that has not been formal legally embodied in Indonesian bureaucratic regulation. Bureaucracy is identical with paper culture, stamps, and signatures. While e-mail, because of the absence of signature and stamp, is not considered as the major concern.

Actually classic public administration paradigm is considered no longer compatible with the times. As stated by Denhardt and Denhardt (2008:28) current administration paradigm has shifted from the classical paradigm characterized by bureaucracy hegemony in public services to a users’ satisfaction based through state administrative paradigm known as the New Public Services. Besides the paradigm shift as stated by Denhardt on the other side, the development of
bureaucratic organizations can not avoid the fast development of information and communication technologies.

Then, based on the paternalistic character of Indonesian society which is characterized by top-down pattern, a shift should be initiated by the leaders. The habituation of e-government in the frame of new paradigm of public service must be started from the leaders of the bureaucracy. Therefore bureaucratic leaders must be able to apply e-leadership.

E-Leadership is leadership that combines the concept has been exist in currently leadership with the development of technology. E-Leadership tried to take advantage of technological developments to influence subordinates according to the values espoused by the leaders. Budvytyte (2006) stated that the E-leadership comprises of 2 basic elements: technology and leadership. Further Budvytyte figure out e-leadership as follows.

Because e-government is a new culture, therefore the use of e-leadership is not enough because changing habits and culture of the bureaucracy which has been rooted deeply is not an easy matter. Therefore the application of e-leadership must also be equipped with change management. In some cases the application of e-government in some countries, change management is also a fundamental factor for e-government because it is not just a mere technological change but it is working cultural change and interaction between people, both interactions between people in the bureaucracy and the interaction between bureaucrats and the community.
The importance of change management is underlined by Low and Kifle (2009) who said that change management is needed to assist the transition of ‘resisting subcultures’, many individual civil servants, the groups and the organizations in the public sector in adapting to the changes brought about by new technologies.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of e-government is essentially a cultural change. In a paternalistic society such as the Indonesian people, a change will be successful if it is started from the leader. Therefore the implementation of e-government calls for e-leadership which is ready to change the work culture through change management. The combination of e-leadership and change management will be the main prerequisite in the implementation of e-government in Indonesia. This has implications on the recruitment of bureaucracy leaders that should consider both aspects.

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