I. Introduction

If the 20th century is an era of .com, the 21st century is an era of .gov. The emergence of E-government with information and communication technologies (ICTs) which are used to harness the operations of Government services, to facilitate service delivery, to promote responsiveness, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, transparency, the rule of law, openness and knowledge sharing (UN report, 2006) brings a totally new focus for governments to rethink their functions. The United Nations (UN) and the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) defined E-government as “utilizing the Internet for delivering government information and services to citizens,” and China’s Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development defines it as “the use of ICTs, and particularly the Internet, as a tool to achieve better government.” Obviously, the goals of E-government are to bring the government closer to citizens by providing them with easier access to information through personal computers, telephones and other resources; to modernize public services in which joined-up government institutions communicate and work more effectively and efficiently; to increase and capture revenue more efficiently; and to increase mechanisms that create more accountability and transparency in the public sector. E-government has great influences on the way of government services delivery and even the whole government service delivery system.

Just as traditional government management needs performance evaluation, after investing a lot in E-government all the governments confront how to evaluate E-government performance. Financial accounting measurements are extensively employed to evaluate government performance, but they do not indicate the reasons for those outcomes and how to improve (Wright et al., 1999). Because, E-government service is different from business service in delivering forms and its expected outcomes, this traditional cost-benefit analysis can only provide limited lessons for E-government

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1 Author’s information: the Department of Public Administration in Korea University.
service providers and researchers (Assion Lawson et al., 2008). So, it needs an appropriate performance measurement tool for better development of E-government.

Since 1993, China has started the construction of E-government with “Three Gold” programs 2(China Culture Web, 2006) and then in 1994 China was permitted to enter the internet and then developed China Education and Research Network and gov.cn by China’s Post and Telecommunication Ministry 3. In 1999, the “Government Online” program was officially initiated by China Telecom and Information Center of State Council, which plan the big picture of tri-tone-E-government Online, E-government and Network Society. Although E-government develops rigorously, the evaluation for E-government performance is not mature at all. This paper uses the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) to construct a framework for E-government performance evaluation and give some suggestions for improving operational effectiveness and efficiency of E-government service to citizens.

II. Overview of China’s E-government Development

China central government has exerted its effort to e-government endeavor since the turn of the century. Although the National Economic Informatization programs were established as early as in 1993, it is not until 1999 when the government online projects were put forward to be implemented through the whole country. This means that China stared to take its e-government construction in a real sense. In 2000, the 15th Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) convened its 5th session-officially put forward a strategic policy of “bringing along China’s industrialization with informatization”. In the following year, the Leading Group for National Informatization was reorganized in order to formulate its first nation-wide informatization program prior to e-government development. During the 16th Congress of CPC in 2002, this policy was further emphasized with a set of specific goals and concrete measures.

The e-government development in China reached a fast track and made a steady process in its construction. Its national e-government framework has taken shape-more than 200 million citizens are now actively online, the number of IP addresses reaches 135 million, “CN” domain names reaches a record of 9 million, and governments at various levels in China have all established their own websites (CINIC. 2008).

The Division of Public Administration and Development Management, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DPADM/DESA), the United Nations is making benchmarking efforts to E-government surveys on the 192 member countries in the United Nations, which are the most comprehensive, innovative, influential and enlightening all over the world. It includes UN Global E-government Survey 2003, UN Global E-Government Survey 2004: Towards Access for Opportunity, UN Global E-

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2 Three Gold programs comprises of “Golden Bridge”, “Golden Customs” and “Golden Card”, which aims to construct China’s “information highway”. “Golden Bridge” as main part of the project, is to develop the infrastructures covering almost the whole country. “Golden Customs” is the information network of national economic trade to efficiently manage national materials market and foreign trades too. “Golden Card” is to utilize trade card which then develops to be the social individual information card.

3 China’s Post and Telecommunication Ministry was founded on November 1, 1949 and its function is to administer the post and telecommunication in the whole country and in March 1998 it was substituted with the Ministry of Information Industry of the People’s Republic of China.

According to the United Nations e-Government Survey Series, the rise in China’s e-government readiness rankings proves that China improves its overall performance in e-government a lot during 2003-2008 (see table 1). Although China are still in the second 35 countries, but China has moved its place from 74th to 65th within only 5 years, which is a great step in e-government construction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
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<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>0.4356</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>0.5078</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>0.5017</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In the respect of e-participation, China has made an even better progress (See table 2). China has made “significant strides” (UN E-government Survey 2008) - moving in place from 33 in 2003 to 20 in 2008, and “the national portal of China http://www.gov.cn/ supports citizen participation and conducts online polling…The site uses audio and video multimedia tools to disseminate information, policies and guidelines”(Wang Changsheng, 2008). In this sphere, the rise in rankings means China’s governments are moving to a more democratic way to government reconstruction with the support of e-government in the long term.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
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<td>32</td>
</tr>
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<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Among the five stages of service delivery, China has completed it emerging phase, almost completed its “enhance” phase, and is obviously moving from the phase of “interactive” to that of “transactional” and “connected” (See table 3). China will have more internet users within its borders in the future, and the infrastructure and active users will create tremendous potential for the expansion of online service delivery and more transformative dimensions of the Chinese public sector.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Enhance</th>
<th>Interactive</th>
<th>Transactional</th>
<th>Connected</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4 E-government readiness index includes the web measure index, telecommunication infrastructure index and human capital index.

5 E-participation index includes e-information, e-consultation and e-decision making.
In a word, China’s e-government has witnessed a great progress during last decade, and is moving into better performance with the support of information communication technology. It has aroused a fundamental change of government structure and created a huge potential for expansion of government service delivery. There is a long way to go for China from this initial stage of “information delivering,” to a close combination of the government portals construction itself on the one hand, with the systematic back-office re-organization or integration of the government, on the other (Yang Xueshan, 2008).

III. E-government performance evaluation in China

China’s E-government performance evaluation indicators in 2008 includes four indicator systems for ministry-level, province-level, city-level and county-level E-government performance evaluation. The core indicators are information openness, online service, public participation, which details the key points for openness, focuses on service convenience and quality, address public participation (see tables in appendix I). Those indicator systems are the criteria for government agencies to evaluate their performance and design their next strategic plans. With the short history of China’s E-government, China’s E-government performance evaluation still need more improvements. At present, some third institutes and governments themselves at different levels has tried to evaluate E-government performance.

By third institutes

China Center for Information Industry Development has been devolved by the Information Office of State Council to evaluate the E-government performance at ministry-level, province-level, city-level and county-level, which is quite well-known and nationally used in China. This evaluation system focuses on information openness, online service and public participation for e-governments at various levels. In addition, China Center for Information Industry Development has taken the job of evaluating E-government performance for 7 years at ministry and local level, including website contents and quality, online service, online work, public feedback, online supervision and feature functions. Moreover, Network Economic Center of Beijing University, Guanghua Management school of Beijing University and China Center for Information Industry Development jointly submitted the 2006 China’s E-government Research Report, which measured 289 county-level, 32 capital city-level, 32 province-level E-government performance focusing on seven hot issues of E-governance (Wang Tao, et al, 2008).

By government themselves

So far, E-government performance evaluation by government themselves are not so many in China, but it is still an important strategy for governments to supervise and direct
the development of e-government. Since 2003, Jilin province government has had annual E-government performance evaluation to 58 government websites at the end of the year, through “unit-self examination, online feedback and inspecting group appraise”. Similarly, since 2000, Beijing government started E-government performance evaluation with different themes every year. Similarly, some local governments such as Qingdao, Huinan, Ningxia, Shanghai, Shenzhen governments also have engaged in E-government performance evaluation in order to improve the performance of both e-government and government themselves. All the above shows that, one the one hand, China’s E-government is going to the new stage of service and security with increasing demand; on the other hand, the performance evaluation by third institutes and government themselves gives examples and new opportunities for better strategies to evaluate and then improve its performance.

**Problems in China’s E-government performance evaluation**

The problems in China’s E-government performance evaluation are mainly: first, focusing on technical indicator, not much on governance indicators; second, bad measurement methods; third, weak management system of E-government performance evaluation.

Targeting on government websites is the main way to evaluate E-government performance and boosts the government websites construction, information openness, and service increase. But it focuses on outputs such as the number of volumes on the websites, the number of services, and the interaction with the public, instead of outcomes such as the utilization rate and customer satisfaction. Moreover, it emphasizes the result not process, which discourages the participation from public managers and gives incentives to them to address results only. The resulting problems are the unilateralism of evaluation and over-investment in government websites construction without careful consideration and design.

The performance indexes of different sectors take some portion of the whole government performance, but the features of functions and services have direct relations to the ranks of E-government performance. The ranking performance evaluation is common to see in reality and different sectors’ ranks maybe relatively fixed because of their features of functions and services, such as sectors directly enacting with the public and those not, or sectors offering lots of services and those not. Therefore, it is necessary to build a more rational evaluation system to comprehensively evaluate the performance of e-government.

**IV. Balanced Scorecard implementation into E-government**

As the most popular performance measurement tool, the balanced Scorecard has been employed by hundreds of organizations both in private and public sectors. But whether the application of BSC in E-government succeeds or not is a new challenge for government, because E-government service is quite different from market products.

**Balanced Scorecard as a performance measurement tool**
In early 1990s, Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton first addressed the currently most popular performance measurement method—Balanced Scorecard and built the foundation for evaluating organization performance from a multi-perspective perspective (R. S. Kaplan & D. P. Norton, 1992). Using a strategic map of goals and measures, Balanced Scorecard transferred from a performance measurement tool to a strategic management system. Balanced Scorecard aims, on the one hand, at the balance of a strategy by considering various perspectives and on the other hand, at the operationalization of the corresponding strategic goals and their translation into a set of measurable targets. It includes four interrelated business perspectives—financial perspective, internal business, innovation and learning perspective and customer satisfaction (See figure 1), which can not only measure and indicate the current operating performance but also the drivers of the future performance.

The core of Balanced Scorecard is that firms need certain knowledge, skills, and systems (learning and innovation perspective) to innovate and build the right strategic capabilities and efficiencies (internal process perspective), in order to deliver values to customers (customer perspective), which in turn result in higher shareholder value (financial perspective) (Kaplan and Norton, 2000). This causal relationship among these four perspectives and corresponding strategies provide a platform and basis for a firm or an organization to make a strategic management plan.

E-government Balanced Scorecard Model

Figure 1. The Balanced Scorecard
Resource from Kaplan and Norton (1992)
The E-government Balanced Scorecard model aims at providing a systematic and structured method for E-government service providers to design and implement their plans for strategic development both in the short term and long term. The map of those four perspectives helps E-government service providers to translate their goals into strategies based on Balanced Scorecard model (See figure 2).

In BSC model, innovation and leaning perspective is the divers of future performance and the foundation of setting up strategies. Kaplan and Norton (1996 b) argues that firms must continually improve employees skills, organization environment and technology capabilities to survive in market competition. Though E-government service does not need to gain more market share, it still needs learning and innovation capabilities to create new technologies or new ways to integrate heterogeneous platforms, in order to share information and communicate among sectors and with citizens, which in turn facilitates efficient collaboration and faster decision-making and response to public requires.

The internal process perspective addresses the critical internal process for firms to excel, derived from the impacts on customer satisfaction and financial performance, for instance cycle time, quality and productivity (Kaplan and Norton, 1992). But E-government offers a portal way to communicate with and response to citizens and meanwhile gives the government (back-office) enough information to make decisions. In order to effectively communicate with citizens, E-government needs to make an efficient and effective internal process to collect information through website, make decisions and then response. During this process, how to effectively utilize information flow is the key for sectors to collaborate and cooperate efficiently. On the other hand, the effective internal process of E-government can also give more time for back-office to review, decide and response.

The financial perspective indicates if and how firms’ strategies enhance their improvements. For E-government, a lot of financial investment is needed for infrastructure construction and necessary technical and managerial human resources. In the short term, it is unlikely to see the same return on investment or benefits like in economy market, but it will has a positive effect on government service delivery in the long term (Assion Lawson et al, 2008). Moreover, E-government contributes to more effective information sharing among sectors and to less administrative costs such as declining manual administrative work and less repeated work of previous work.

The customer perspective helps to translate customer service and satisfaction into measures to see the concerns of customers (Kaplan and Norton, 1992). The customer perspective is the core of Balanced Scorecard, so does E-government. To satisfy citizens’ specific requirements through E-government service can not only help decline administrative costs, but also offer a portal to “face-to-face talk” with citizens at any time. The effective two-way communication makes citizens “touch” governments’ concern about them and give information for government decision making, which leads to effective policy design and less resistance against policy implementation from the public.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customer perspective</th>
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<tr>
<td>How can e-government service providers identify measures of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
E-government Balanced Scorecard as a strategic management system

When performance measures for customer, internal process and learning and innovation perspectives are added to the financial metrics, the result is not only a broader perspective on the company’s health and activities, it is also a powerful organizing framework (Robert S. Kaplan & Norton, 1996a).

Those four processes—translating the vision, communicating and linking, business planning and feedback and learning (Robert S. Kaplan & Norton, 1996a) combine together to link short-term strategic goals with long-term actions, which bridges the gap between strategic goals and performance measurement and has been extensively used by over 300 organizations (Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton, 1996c). They argue that the first step helps to build a consensus around the organization’s vision and strategy, expressed in an integrated set of goals and measures; the second process tries to make strategies communicated up and down the organizations and link individual goals and organizational goals; the third process aims at integrating financial plans to achieve the strategic goals; the fourth process gives organization the capacity of strategic learning from other three perspectives—customer, learning and innovation, and internal business process.

Figure 3 shows the E-government BSC model management system. There are four processes like in Kaplan and Norton’s model: translating the vision, communicating and linking, business planning and feedback and learning. First of all, E-government management sector need to conduct the whole sector to define their vision and come to agreement on it, which is to create an overall framework for the whole organization to implement. If it got approved and then it will go to next process; if it fails, it will need to
be improved. Then the vision will be translated into goals by government agencies and strategies in the communicating and liking process. The goals and strategies are communicated up and down agencies and are delivered to BSC management sector for updating. After strategic goals defined, government agencies need to define activities for strategy implementation, aligning financial plans to activities, in order to fulfill their short
term targets as well as update their long term plans based on short term achievements. All improved changes need to be delivered to BSC management sector for updating. In the forth process, the feedback from BSC performance evaluation gives government agencies reflections of their work and also information about whether the vision and strategies need to be revised or not. Then a new cycle of the four processes will start again for further improvements.

The effective cooperation between E-government management sector and E-government BSC model management sector is needed for this strategic management system. The increasing collaboration intensity and frequency in communicating and linking and feedback and learning processed could contribute to successful realization of strategies and visions both short-term and long-term. But how to effectively communicate, how to integrate financial plans with strategic goals, and how to learning from feedback are the keys to catch the core of BSC model management system. Therefore, China’s E-government needs more effort to learn successful experience and design BSC performance management system.

V. Conclusion

As the development of ICTs, E-government will continue to play very important role in administration and public service. Developing E-government has become the important means to enhance government management and service competence and civil satisfaction, and thus government performance management development can’t break away from this brand-new environment either (LI Ping, GAO Ming-ming, 2008). Therefore, E-government performance evaluation has to be paid more attention in order to provide effective data for further improvement and then institutional change. The BSC model provides a new perspective of evaluating China’s E-government performance, but it still needs more research, because they can not only reflect the output and outcome, but also influence policy making. Therefore, an integrated performance evaluation system is the first step for better future of E-government and a better government.

Referring the differences between E-government service and market products, whether the BSC model originally from business world works in publics sector become a challenge for both the academic and governments. The big differences between the benefit maximization of company and the better governance for governments should be taken into consideration more comprehensively in order to effectively apply the BSC model into E-government. Moreover, China’s specific characteristics also need more study and empirical cases study is needed for further research too.

References


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Appendix I:

Table 1 Performance evaluation indicators of ministry websites
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core indicators</th>
<th>Subindicators</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance evaluation indicators of ministry websites</td>
<td>Information openness(29)</td>
<td>Active openness</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Request openness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Information openness contents</td>
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<td>Information openness regulation</td>
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<td>Information openness instructions</td>
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<td>Supervision system</td>
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<td>The degree of service convenience</td>
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<td>Public participation(27)</td>
<td>Consultation for appeal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Public opinion</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Regular communication</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Websites functions and design(3)</td>
<td>Websites response</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Additional function</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contact information</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Security(25)</td>
<td>2-4 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5-7 months</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8-10 months</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: http://www.harbin.gov.cn/hrbzfw/hrb_dzxx/display.php?id=192

Table 2 Performance evaluation indicators of province websites

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<th>Subindicators</th>
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<td>Request openness</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Information openness regulation</td>
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<td>Information openness instructions</td>
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<td>Online service(21)</td>
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<td>Service contents and quality</td>
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<td>Three-R problem</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Customer satisfaction</td>
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6 Three-R means agriculture, country and peasant.
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<td>Service contents and quality 9</td>
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<td>“100 online service” 2</td>
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<td>Three-R problem 3</td>
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<td>The degree of service convenience 9</td>
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<td>Customer satisfaction 2</td>
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<td>8-10 months 9</td>
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</table>


Table 3 Performance evaluation indicators of city websites

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<td>Regular communication 9</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 4 Performance evaluation indicators of county websites
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Websites functions and design(3)</th>
<th>Websites response</th>
<th>0.7</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Web page show</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Additional function</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contact information</td>
<td>0.5</td>
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