When quality management meets electronic government: the case of citizen charters for electronic public services in Spanish central administration

J. Ignacio Criado

I. Introduction

In this paper is presented a preliminary analysis of the experience with Citizen Charters for Electronic Public Services, recently adopted within the Spanish Central Administration. This initiative tackles with the fact that quality of public services has become an increasing area of interest in public administrations within the digital age and that it will be possible to develop in the nearest future strategies exploring sinergies between these two spheres, facing the improvement of public sector orientation to the citizens and administrative transparency. At first glance, the evolution of Citizen Charters for Electronic Public Services deployes certain potential to generate sinergies within public sector organizations. Nevertheless, some difficulties associated with the institutional context of implementation also emerge, as observed in Spanish Central Administration.

This paper offers some evidences and conclusions related with a recent and in progress public management reform experience adopted in the Spanish central administration. Even if the diffusion of the Citizen Charters for Electronic Public Services is now in its first moments, the capacity to interact between quality management and eGovernment strategies and initiatives deserves a specific analysis of the first steps of this initiative. To do so, a detailed fieldwork was deployed during the last three months of 2005. In the first instance, it included the search, identification, and analysis of Citizen Charters for Electronic Public Services then available within units and agencies of the Spanish central administration. Besides, some personal interviews were implemented in order to complete the information, when it was required. Finally, a documentary analysis was deployed using official strategies and documents emanated from Spanish Ministries related with these subjects.

The first section will provide a general overview of the last public sector reforms, addressing the importance of the citizens and administrative transparency. Secondly, there is a section specifically devoted to the diffusion of quality management and eGovernment ideas, using Citizen charters and Electronic public services. Then, there is a descriptive analysis of the experience with Citizen Charters for Electronic Public Services. Finally, the author provides a conclusion with some reflections and future prospects.

II. Recent public sector reforms: searching for the citizen and administrative transparency

During the last thirty years different and various reform strategies and policies have been formulated to transform public administrations in different politico-administrative contexts. In general, the rubric New Public Management (NGP) inspired numerous processes of administrative modernisation in developed countries, providing not only some theoretical principles, but also a toolkit to implement such aspirations (Barzelay, 2001; Osborne y Gaebler, 1992). In that context, the economic globalization was consolidated, the ‘rolling back
the State' movement was prompted, as well as a certain flavour of public sector decline. This was the starting point for the adoption in different institutional settings of new administrative schools of thought under the new institutional economics, based on a market orientation, and tools and techniques of private sector organizations (managerialism) as phyllosophical and practical ideas for public sector reform (Hood, 1991; Pollit, 1993).

There was a common diagnosis at international level about the problems of traditional bureaucracy as organizational system for public services, being among the most salient problems of public bureaucracies the incapacity to attend customer needs and the lack of transparency within the administrative black box (Hughes, 2003, Lane, 2000). Even in a rhetorical way, those analysis invoked the demand of a growing approximation to the citizens, surpassing the traditional tendency to ignore public services customers (Vigoda & Golembiewski, 2001). At the same time, it was extended the idea of enlarging administrative transparency, breaking through public management opacity, above all, in public service implementation (DeLeon & Denhardt, 2000).

First, there was a clear attempt in public sector organizations to transform the nature of the relationships with the citizens. The potential of the metaphor of citizens as consumers of public services was rapidly extended to underline their importance as recipients of public policies and products, with some special rights and duties derived from the political dimension of that interaction. Second, the idea of administrative transparency was reinforced in a moment in which public administrations were confronting a more complex context blurred by growing networks of agents. The administrative transparency was even a more difficult objective than the approximation to the citizens, because the former implied real participation in decision-making processes. This idea was alien or even opposed to the logic of private sector companies, and was supported on the political dimension of public sector and the distinctive nature of the context to provide public services.

Different routes were explored in order to introduce these two general objectives. This paper tackles with two of them particularly: on the one hand, the adoption of instruments, systems and techniques related with quality management in public sector organizations. On the other hand, the adoption, use and diffusion of information and communication technologies and networks for administrative systems digitalisation in public service delivery.

III. Implementing quality management and eGovernment: citizen charters and electronic public services

Citizen Charters and Electronic Public Services are among the strategies related to quality management and eGovernment that more attention have deserved in the agenda of administrative modernization during the last years. On the one hand, quality management in public administration was originated in a double view: as a continuous process that integrates adaptation and change; and the idea that change, as permanent improvement, is associated to a deeper process of communication and participation with the citizens. In this sense, CC have been adopted in different politico-administrative contexts, although their results have been unclear, above all, in continental countries. On the other hand, eGovernment has implied the progressive informatization of public sector organizations, offering new opportunities to endow of greater transparency the relationships with citizens, by means of a new channel to provide information to the public and open up the internal machinery of traditional public administration. However, the model adopted to develop eGovernment, based on SPE, has also implied lacks in those initial aspirations. More important is that, even though the origins of the mentioned instruments were completely alien and they continued private sector logics of development, recent progresses pave the way for a certain
convergence in the new digital sphere.

**III.1. Citizen charters in a comparative perspective**

Citizen charters (CC) have been used to improve the quality of public services offered to the citizens. The CC initiative started in the beginning of the 1990s in the United Kingdom, as a second generation product of the thatcherist public sector reform strategy, with the explicit objective to transform radically the services offered by public administrations, emphasizing results and client satisfaction, and using dynamics of private sector organizations (Bynoe, 1996; Lo Schiavo, 2000). In that regard, it was stressed the logic of the market, and underlined the customer sovereignty with respect to service delivery. In both cases, the original aspiration was to solve the magic equation: *‘doing more with less, and doing it more nicer’* (Gore, 1994). The subsequent development of CC implied different implementation strategies addressing various institutional settings, so its practical fulfillment has presented various styles, according to macro politico-administrative traditions and micro policy implementation styles, as confirmed in the Spanish case.

The term CC has been defined in various contexts with different implications worth to consider. In general, CC apprehends the idea of developing strategies to introduce some quality standards in public service delivery, with a common view to extend the logic of consumer sovereignty. In essence, CC are a quality strategy that offers a type of consumer guarantee, being an explicit objective to improve the responsiveness of public services providers to clients or users (Pollit, 1994), also they are based on the common idea of extending the market logic of consumer sovereignty to public service provision (Walsh, 1995).

There are essentially two approaches to increasing the sovereign power of consumers of public services. The first is to make providers more responsive to consumers by consultation and more accountable to government and the community through performance monitoring. Consumer power depends on the effectiveness of voice mechanisms. The second approach is to make providers more responsive to consumers by providing consumers with choice based on competition between providers of public services. The majority of cases CC generally rely on voice mechanisms in the form of monitoring performance against specified standards and complaint mechanisms (McGuire, 2002). In that regard, CC have integrated a wide range of quality assurance tools including quality awards, benchmarking, providing information to the citizens and clients, complaints, redress and suggestions techniques, consultative mechanisms or setting service standards.

The implementation of CC has been different addressing countries situated in different macro politico-administrative traditions. One of the most commented questions among scholars working on public sector reform is the comparison between, on the one hand, the countries of the Anglo-american tradition and, on the other hand, the countries of the Continental-european area (Pollit & Bouckaert, 2004). This approach turns out to be prominent asking for the absence of convergence in CC strategies in a comparative view. More than a few general objectives, stated in governmental *ad hoc* documents, the development of CC have depended on cultural values, institutional structures, as well as the timing or the history of the process implementation in each group of countries.

Even if this point is not broadly considered here, it is interesting to distinguish, at least, both politico-administrative traditions in order to understand the situation in Spain. First, Anglo-american countries, such as Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and US were the most prone to the new instruments related to public management reform, and they have also been more permeable to the adoption and diffusion of this NPM strategy. In general, CC have been understood like a set of objectives that should be reached in public service
delivery. Those objectives are defined by means of verifiable, quantitative and qualitative standards through evaluations carried out by independent units dedicated in exclusive to this work.

In turn, in continental countries the contents of CC have derived more slowed changes down and also less substantive. The principles established within CC in countries as Italy, Belgium or France, also Spain, have not impacted so much in doing competitive public services, devising standards or providing a greater capacity of choice to the users, according to the market rules in the Anglo-american cases (LoSchiaivo, 2000). In general, CC in continental countries have been used to improve internal procedures and, in some cases, they have intended to extend users rights as citizens, using concepts such as equality, accessibility, neutrality, and confidentiality of personal data. However, neither CC were conceived as a consumer contract guaranteeing service standards, nor commitments of CC were more than mere specifications, with a narrow customer perspective (Olias de Lima, 2003)

In Spain, the extent of CC has been major quantitatively than in other continental countries, even if the initiative was adopted some years later. During the last months of Felipe González’ Socialist Party government in 1996, the Administración General del Estado (AGE) (Spanish central administration) and under a broader quality management project, was first discussing the Cartas de Servicios, inspired by the CC initiative in the United Kingdom (other experiences also copied the UK, like the Chartes des services publics in France, Cartas dei servizi in Italy, Carta para a qualidade nos serviços in Portugal, or Chartes de l'utilisateur de services publiques in Belgium). Finally, the Cartas de Servicios were launched some years later during the Aznar’ conservative government in 1999, through the Royal Decree 1259/1999.

Olias de Lima (2003) has pointed out that the Cartas de Servicios within AGE included three types of objectives related to the orientation to the citizens. First, democratic legitimacy, by means of the diffusion of information and accountability for services funded with public money; second, citizen rights and their guarantees, doing effective the influence of the citizens in the contents of public services; and, finally, those affecting the improvement of services, in this case, consolidating evaluation systems. Nevertheless, it was evident the underevaluation of qualitative success factors, being more prominent the total amount of Cartas de Servicios, a typical attitude of public-law culture, dominant in Spanish public administration.

III.2. Electronic services in public administration

Electronic public services (EPS) delivery is the most extended strategy for eGovernment development. During the last years, a number of academics, consultants, political leaders, also senior civil servants and academics spread promises about new potentials of the last Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and, specially, the Internet in the interaction with government (Electronic Government or eGovernment). The Internet was presented as a means to transform the understanding of interactions with citizens and the participation in public affairs. In that regard, it was suggested the importance of ICTs for an extension of democratic processes and the promotion of democracy, including consultation in the decision-making process and traditional methods to participate in elections of representatives (eDemocracy) (Hacker & van Dijk, 2000; Wilhelm, 2000). Also, it was underlined the new role of ICTs for an active participation of critical actors for the correct formulation, design, implementation, and evaluation of public policies and services, enhancing governance practices (eGovernance) (Mechling, 2002). However, the majority of
successful (and implemented) projects were related to EPS delivery, using patterns closed to the eCommerce and private sector organizations (Criado, 2004). In resume, during the first years of the eGovernment ‘boom’ the relationships between government and ICTs has been dominated by consumerist views, what is more, EPS guided by the NPM philosophy, predominated with the importance of ICTs benefits for organizational efficiency and efficacy, with a restrictive perspective of citizens as consumers of information age services. In fact, the first wave of eGovernment reforms has been influenced by the private sector approach to the information society (Leitner & Criado, 2006), obscuring the opportunities to provide information and promote participation opportunities to the citizenry.

Before the spreading of the World Wide Web in the beginning of the nineties, the possibilities to use the ICTs and the Internet in public administrations were already appreciable. As assumed by Taylor et alia (1996), in the decade of the 1960s and late public administrations lead the process of technological innovation and implementation using computers to support tasks for basic management (information systems development, management of payrolls or accounting applications), however in some extent they lost this position in the subsequent decades (Taylor et alia, 1996). These authors identified in that moment two opportunities for the electronic services in the public environment, keeping in mind that the basic objectives were diverse (Taylor et allia, 1996: 266): 'one is to implement major improvements in the speed of response, efficiency, and accuracy of public services, often by emulating techniques that have been well proved in the private sector. The other is to bring government closer to citizens and to encourage broader and more active participation in decision making by developing an infrastructure for “electronic democracy” capabilities'. Modernizing government has been explored addressing the first option.

These approaches were accelerated with the spreading of the web in public administration during the last decade. The importance of the web originates from the fact that it is the service that prompted the social and political diffusion of the Internet in the early 1990s and its diffusion as it relates to governmental web sites has been impressive. Different analyses of public sector web sites have been undertaken, however they have almost exclusively addressed the potential for public service delivery, generating rankings of eGovernment developments and efforts in groups of countries, regions, or municipalities (West, 2004). In general, these studies have concentrated on observations of how company web sites have performed, but the extend of progress is more questionable within the public sector (Dunleavy & Margetts, 2002), however they confirm an important development pattern: the growing importance of EPS delivery in the last eGovernment strategies, developments and projects.

The reasons of this situation are various, although here we provide some hypothesis. First, it is important to remark the positive role of EPS, as well as the advantages associated with them for users and public administrations. Nevertheless, here it is stressed their strategic design and original focus on an excessively consumerist vision. Although it is not the objective of this paper, an acceptable although not completely exhaustive explanation of the development of this strategic option is engaged to the information society promotion policies developed by the European Union during the nineties, since they have had an extensive echo within the vision extended among the administrations of the member States and their sub-national authorities (Alabau, 2004). Fundamentally, those mentioned policies were oriented to finance and implement technological applications offering services that could be rapidly extended among the public, above all, telematic transactions with organizations and businesses, growing the so called European information society. The problem was the mimetic translation of that movement into governmental settings, since was presented EPS delivery as the priority and in a similar vein than in the private sector.
This model has been consolidated during the last years in public administrations of different levels within the member States of the European Union, including Spain. For example, the Lisbon European Council meeting in March 2000 set the objective to become the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010. The eEurope Action Plan 2002 endorsed at the Feira European Council in June 2000, was a central element of this strategy to transform the European Economy (European Commission, 2002). The eEurope Action Plan was built upon a methodology which consisted of accelerating legal measures; re-focusing existing financial support programs; and benchmarking. However, within this general framework, the eEurope action plan target for eGovernmet was a basic set of services that should be available on-line by the end of 2002. The Internal Market Council agreed to a definition of basic services covering 8 services to businesses and 12 to citizens. Progresses in getting these services on-line was monitored by a survey of the private consultancy Cap Gemini-Ernst & Young, as the most important factor for eGovernment development in European member States (see Table 1).

Spain was part of the wider aims of the European Union to further eGovernment within European public administrations using EPS. The mentioned perspective was adopted in broad terms within different strategies and plans designed to develop and enhance eGovernment in Spain, from INFO XXI (2001-2003), to the current Moderniza (2005-2007). Previously, the adoption and diffusion of informatics and information technologies in Spanish central administration was very important (Casarrubios & Criado, 2005; Martínez, 1984). However, the new capabilities of the Internet and the promotion of the information society displaced the debate towards public services digitisation (EPS), without a reflection on the meaning and consequences of this process, or alternatives to consider citizens more than mere consumers of electronic public supermarkets. Besides, data available confirms that percentages of citizens and businesses using the Internet to interact with public administration is low, and among them those that have experienced EPS are extremely reduced, specially in Spain (see Table 2).

IV. A convergence of strategies? Citizen charters for electronic public services in Spanish central administration

Recently, there is a renewed interest in the potential of quality management systems and eGovernment instruments in the Administración General del Estado (AGE). The objective of this section is to understand the extent and possibilities for a convergence between both strategies, as well as the form in which that could affect to the relationships of public administrations and citizens. In the following pages, it is presented in some detail the recent experience with Citizen Charters for Electronic Public Services (CCEPS), that implies an incipient convergence between quality management in public administration and eGovernment, in general, and Citizen charters (CC) and Electronic public services (EPS), in particular.

The origins of CCEPS within the Spanish politico-administrative context are very recent. The first mention within an official document of the AGE was in 2003, when the Soto Commission\(^2\) evaluated the INFO XXI Spanish action plan for the information society. In the

\(^2\) The panel of experts, the majority of them from private companies, adopted the name of Soto Commission from its president, Juan Soto Serrano (Honour President of Hewlett Packard Spain). The rest of members of this standing group were as follows, in alphabetical order and with the name of their native organization: Dña. Belén Amatriain Corbi (Telefónica Publicidad e Información, TPI), D. Juan Arena de la Mora (Bankinter), D. Jesús Banegas Núñez (Asociación Nacional de Industrias Electrónicas, ANIEL), D. Luis Bassat Coen (Bassat Ogilvy Iberia), D. Gabriel Ferraté i Pascual (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya), D. Juan Pi Llorens (IBM), D. José Manuel Serra Peris (Auna Telecomunicaciones), D. John de
final report, the Soto Commission stated a number of general recommendations in the
different areas to pave the Spanish road to the information society. In the particular section for
eGovernment, was mentioned ‘the necessity of an agreement between regional and central
governments to periodically publish a list of electronic services available and develop
indicators that could evaluate their use by citizens and businesses’ (CEEDSI, 2003: 30). In
addition, it was estimated the convenience of establishing a minimum set of standards in
public service delivery, developing electronic services and their use for the citizens. This was
the first formulation, although vague and in a rhetorical way, that connected the relevance
adopting specific standards in public service delivery and new attributes for electronic
services.

Assuming these recommendations, the Ministry of Science and Technology and the
Ministry for Public Administrations approved in April 2003 the Plan de Choque para el Impulso
de la Administración Electrónica en España (Action Plan for the Electronic Administration
Development in Spain). This specific initiative for eGovernment promotion was adopted at the
same time that España.es, the second Spanish Action plan addressing the information
society development. The Plan de Choque was divided into four areas and nineteen
measures, with an explicit reference to service quality in eGovernment through Measure 4
`Cartas de Servicios Electrónicos' (CCEPS). The adoption of the Soto Commission
recommendations had a limited scope and was oriented to the external communication with
citizens, giving them information about the services available in the digital sphere, although
the formulation implied certain ambition related with the future needs to create standards and
rights associated to EPS:

Se informará a los ciudadanos acerca de los servicios electrónicos que se encuentran a su
disposición, indicando los compromisos de calidad asumidos en su prestación, los incentivos
específicos asociados a su uso, así como los derechos en relación con estos. Para ello deberán
establecerse indicadores y métricas claras de uso y calidad de los servicios, que debe definir el
Observatorio de Tecnologías de la Información del Consejo Superior de Informática y para el
Impulso de la Administración Electrónica.

El Ministerio de Administraciones Públicas en colaboración con los Departamentos
Ministeriales será el responsable de actualizar esta información con una periodicidad trimestral.
(MCyT-MAP, 2003: 18-19)

This was the first formulation of CCEPS within an official document of the AGE. This
administrative innovation required a legal mention to the Royal Decree 1259/1999, which
regulated quality management systems in Spanish central government. On the other hand,
the Ministry for Public Administrations adopted the responsibility for Measure 4
implementation and the coordination of ministerial departments to do so. From october 2003,
AGE disseminates a list of EPS available in central government and a group of standards for
quality service delivery in the digital sphere (available: http://www.administracion.es; since

More recently, the Royal Decree 951/2005 has regulated explicitly CCEPS. The new
Royal Decree provides a new framework for the quality management strategy, trying to
articulate the improvement of public services delivery in the AGE. At the same time, it
develops an strategy with different instruments and techniques, and for the first time clearly
link them with eGovernment through CCEPS, integrated within the general strategy for quality
management in the AGE. The above mentioned Royal Decree 951/2005 tackles directly with
the CCEPS:

Zulueta (Sanitas). Secretario: D. Leopoldo González-Echenique y Castellanos de Ubao (Ministry of Science and Technology).
1. Los departamentos y organismos que cuenten con servicios electrónicos operativos publicarán, además de las mencionadas anteriormente, cartas de este tipo de servicios, en los que se informará a los ciudadanos sobre los servicios a los que pueden acceder electrónicamente y en las que se indicarán las especificaciones técnicas de uso y los compromisos de calidad en su prestación.

2. Las cartas de servicios electrónicos, que se tramitarán conforme a lo previsto en los artículos 10, 11 y 12, estarán disponibles en Internet y en soporte impreso. (art. 13. Royal Decree 951/2005)

Introducing a new Royal Decree to reinforce the CCEPS can be seen as a classical law-oriented measure, however opens up a new landscape for quality management in the digital age. In organizational terms, the origins of CCEPS were diffuse. The unit actually managing its implementation (General Inspectorate for Public Services), depending on the Ministry for Public Administrations, was initially alien to its adoption. The initial leadership of the Plan de Choque para el Impulso de la Administración Electrónica en España was under the Spanish Council for Informatics (Consejo Superior de la Informática), a technological unit within the same Ministry for Public Administrations. In that regard, personal semi-structured interviews have confirmed that the Royal Decree 951/2005 has changed the organizational structure for CCEPS, providing new responsibilities to the General Inspectorate for Public Services (actually General Directorate for Quality, Evaluation and Inspection of Public Services), involving a group of senior managers experienced in organizational reform. However, it implies that CCEPS may lack in the technological side, because there is no specific mechanisms to coordinate the role of the Spanish Council for Informatics (actually Spanish Council for the Electronic Administration) and the General Directorate for Administrative Modernization, both key agents for technological implementation of horizontal projects related with eGovernment.

Quantitatively, the total amount of CCEPS has been limited. At the end of the fieldwork for this research, thirteen CCEPS had been approved, in five different ministries, within executive units or line departments, which previously had displayed a CC. The quantitative extent of CCEPS is still very limited, specially within an administration of the size and complexity of AGE. However, the adoption has been produced within important units in terms of areas of activity and organizations with strong quality management experience, as well as with substantive institutional presence on the Internet. In sum, more than a quantitative consideration, the interesting point here is that the adoption of CCEPS in diverse contexts has underlined an incipient interest on the convergence of quality management and eGovernment strategies within broad sectors of Spanish central administration, at first glance, interested in improving service delivery to the citizens in very different areas.

A content analysis of CCEPS confirms that they have reproduced the most important dimensions of conventional CC (see Images 1 and 2). In general, CCEPS have adopted the general flavour of CC, with some limitations and features identified within European-continental public administrations. As a result of the institutional inertia in the Spanish experience, the Royal Decree 951/2005 has regulated in a similar way both instruments,

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CCEPS and CC, not only in terms of direction and management, but also in monitoring and evaluation aspects (art. 13.2).

A more exhaustive content analysis of CCEPS offers evidences about the direction of this strategy in terms of quality management. CCEPS generally provide information about the EPS delivered by the unit, with some technological specifications of use (generally, identified with data processing requirements, identification of programmes required to manage the information, digital certificates and identification, etc.) and some quality standards for EPS offered to the users, some rights and commitments derived from them, however they do not surpass the restrictive approach to quality management derived from the conventional CC.

On the other hand, CCEPS have not implied an important change in the focus of EPS in the agencies studied. In general, the AGE understands public services in the digital age following the mainstream aspects of the general information society discourse. In other words, the CCEPS initiative has not achieved a broad change in the understanding of citizen accessibility and public transparency to using EPS. In that regard, it has not been challenged the traditional eGovernment focus on a restrictive dimension of EPS. In conclusion, the experience with CCEPS in Spanish central administration has developed in a limited extent the relationships between service quality and eGovernment. At this starting stage, it is not clear how is going to be promoted in the future the convergence between CC and EPS in Spanish central administration and if so, how changes will be introduced in public sector quality management and EPS delivery. In that regard, the analysis of the regulation, organization and contents of CCEPS strategy prevents from predictions about radical changes or transformations in the general lines described here. In the meantime for new CCEPS adopters, the unit in charge of this strategy in the AGE has not changed the most important aspects described here in the manual of implementation, in which have been described some new aspects related with specific instructions and inspections for SPE.

V. Concluding remarks

This paper has offered a preliminary analysis of the experience with Citizen Charters for Electronic Public Services (CCEPS), recently adopted within the Spanish Central Administration. This strategy has been based, in some extent, on the philosophy of NPM, that has inspired the last administrative reforms in different contexts. These pages have presented some reflections about the recent developments in quality management in the public sector and eGovernment, addressing two of the most used instruments to alter the framework of the relationships with the citizens and provide more administrative transparency and accountability: Citizen charters (CC) and Electronic public service (EPS). Besides, they have been discussed some of their implications bearing in mind the new possibilities associated with CCEPS. This paper presented a descriptive analysis of this experience based on CCEPS regulation, organization and contents.

Even if results of CCEPS adoption have been limited, it is also clear that this strategy is interesting for future practical and academic exploration. Obviously, it has been difficult to implement concrete changes in public administration using CCEPS, due to the institutional tradition of the Spanish politico-administrative regime, that constrains transformations in the structure of public administration. However, this experience facilitates the attention to the possible convergence between quality management and electronic government for public sector reform. The concrete approach to CC and EPS using the convergence concept of CCEPS confirmed that and provides the opportunity to make other final remarks.

First of all, the initiative analysed here is a truly new experience in the international context. The approach and extent of CCEPS within the the AGE have not been very
ambitious, in spite of the potential to introduce innovations within a new politico-administrative environment in the digital world. In that regard, this general approach to CCEPS has identified a set of different problems within this strategy and have provided some general reflections addressing the importance of the institutional settings in which administrative reforms should be adopted.

Secondly, the link between quality management in public sector organizations and eGovernment strategies is a new way worth to explore in the future. Convergence is the word behind CCEPS, however the initial evolution of this strategy does not pave the hypothesis for synergies to surpass the limitations in the focus adopted by the AGE. In part, those limitations refered to the origins and previous developments of CC and EPS. Probably, it will be required a prior revision of them in order to search for different results from this convergent point of view.

Thirdly, in spite of previous comments, still exists space to unfold part of the potential that the integration of quality management and eGovernment represents. Even if CC and EPS strategies could maintain their own problems, Addressing the CCEPS initiative could benefit from the interest of the units and agencies involved on it to innovate exploring new answers for the complexity represented by the convergence of digital means to interact with citizens and the necessity to make it easier the access to the internal machinery of government.

In conclusion, CCEPS could become an administrative strategy adopted by public administrations in search of continuous improvement and innovation. Addressing this instrument and the situation of Latin-american public administrations, the approach that this paper underlined implies a combination of broad and previous strategies and techniques of reform within public administration. This is to understand the increasing complexity of government and public administration and the necessity to invoke public values to obtain future gains from administrative reform. In sum, public sector organizations need to reach their own approaches, identify specific problems and implement cultural oriented policies, if benefits from (usually) very costly adaptation efforts are expected to be obtained.

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Personal biography

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He has published several chapters and peer reviewed articles on e-Government, quality management and public management reform strategies and policies. His book *Building the Local eAdministration* (published in Spanish, *Construyendo la e-Administración Local*. Madrid, EuroGestión Pública, 2004) was awarded in the *III Fermín Abella y Blave Prize* (Spanish Ministry of Public Administration). Also, his paper ‘Research on e-Government. A Proposal of Theoretical Framework’ (co-authored with M. Carmen Ramilo and Miquel Salvador) was awarded in the XVI Prize of the CLAD-Centro Latinoamericano de Administración para el Desarrollo (Latin American Centre for Development Administration), for monographies in public administration.

His research interests cover new public management strategies and reforms, and quality and knowledge management in public sector organizations. He gives training for Spanish and Latin American civil servants and is an regular lecturer in posgraduate courses and seminars on eGovernment. From 2006, he is on the Editorial Board for *International Journal of Public Sector Management*.

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### Tables and Images

**Table 1. Level of digitalization for 20 basic public services as defined by the European Union**

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<td>L</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
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</table>

Table 2. Percentage of citizens and businesses in Spain using the Internet to...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>% Citizens</th>
<th>% Businesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...get information from public administrations web sites</td>
<td>49.44</td>
<td>57.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...download forms from public administrations web sites</td>
<td>27.31</td>
<td>56.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...send fulfilled forms to public administration</td>
<td>13.08</td>
<td>26.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística (2005)

Image 2. Citizen Charter for Electronic Public Services. Virtual Shop of the Boletín Oficial del Estado (2)

**Servicios que se prestan**

- Servicios de Tienda electrónica • Librería Virtual del BOE.
- Consulta del catálogo completo de libros disponibles en la Librería del BOE.
- Venta de libros mediante pago con tarjeta de crédito. El envío del material adquirido se realiza por correo certificado o agencia de mensajería.
- Servicio AlertaBOE. Servicio personalizado de acceso a la información de la Sección V-A del Boletín Oficial del Estado, por el que se reciben cada día por correo electrónico los anuncios de subastas y concursos públicos de obras y servicios de la materia que se desee.
- Servicio BODelex. Servicio personalizado de acceso a la información legislativa de carácter general publicada en el Boletín Oficial del Estado y la legislación comunitaria de interés nacional publicada en el "Diario Oficial de la Unión Europea", serie L. Se reciben semanalmente por correo electrónico las referencias de los documentos.

**Especificaciones de uso**

- Navegador Internet: Explorer versión 5.0 o superior, Netscape 7.0 o superior, o cualquier navegador que soporte CSS 2.0.
- Venta de libros mediante pago con tarjeta de crédito.
- El envío del material adquirido se realiza por correo certificado o agencia de mensajería.

**Compromisos de calidad que se ofrecen**

- Tramitación de los pedidos a la Tienda virtual dentro de los dos días hábiles siguientes a la compra. (Tiempo medio hasta la expedición de la mercancía al transportista).
- Recogida del pedido dentro de los cuatro días hábiles siguientes a la compra en el caso de envío por agencia de mensajería, y de 10 días para el resto de los casos.