

The Review of Audit Expectation Gap between the Thai PAC and SAI Thailand

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Abstract

The relationship between the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and the Supreme Audit Institution (SAI) is essential for maintaining accountability in public financial management. While international models demonstrate strong collaboration between these bodies, the Thai PAC and the State Audit Office of Thailand (SAO) have long exhibited limited engagement, weak communication, and inconsistent oversight practices. This situation has coincided with increasing trends of non compliance, misuse, and mismanagement of public funds. This paper systematically reviews existing literature, compares Thai practices with international standards, and proposes a framework for studying the audit expectation gap (AEG) between the Thai PAC and SAO. Understanding this gap will support institutional reforms, strengthen parliamentary oversight, and enhance the overall accountability ecosystem in Thailand.

Keywords: Accountability, Public Accounts Committees, Supreme Audit Institutions, Audit Expectation Gap

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Introduction

The duties of Parliaments and Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) are closely interconnected. Parliaments rely on SAIs to provide independent assessments of how public budgets are implemented, while SAIs depend on Parliament to use audit reports—particularly audit recommendations—to influence government actions and strengthen the impact of audits. Effective cooperation between the two enhances accountability, transparency, and integrity in the public sector (International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions, 2010).

Accountability is widely recognized as a core democratic principle in public administration and can be understood through multiple analytical perspectives. Mechkova et al. (2019) distinguish between vertical accountability, exercised through elections and citizen oversight, and horizontal accountability, which relies on institutional checks such as separation of powers, fiscal controls, and legal oversight. Within this institutional dimension, Bovens (2007) conceptualizes accountability as a relational process involving an actor, a forum, and a set of obligations, whereby public officials must provide information and justification, and oversight bodies assess their actions against legal and normative standards. Similarly, Mulgan (2003) views accountability as both a democratic ideal and a mechanism for controlling public power through three essential components: information, explanation, and consequences, emphasizing that oversight must involve not only reporting but also meaningful sanctions or corrective actions.

These theoretical perspectives highlight why Parliaments and SAIs are central to a country's horizontal accountability system. In public financial management, accountability consists of answerability and enforcement (World Bank, 2018). SAIs promote answerability by requiring audited entities to disclose information and justify their performance, while Parliaments—particularly Public Accounts Committees (PACs)—perform the enforcement function by using audit reports to question officials, address deficiencies, and push for corrective actions through hearings and legislative scrutiny. Together, these oversight institutions form a crucial accountability chain that ensures public resources are managed transparently and responsibly.

Oversight institutions, including Parliaments and SAIs, are therefore essential pillars of democratic governance (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023). However, global evidence shows that legislative oversight tends to be strong during budget approval but weak during budget execution, creating opportunities for misuse of public funds (International Budget Partnership, 2018).

In Thailand, the State Audit Office (SAO) serves as the SAI under the 2017 Constitution. It operates independently and conducts financial, compliance, and performance audits. SAO submits its annual performance report to both Houses of Parliament and the Cabinet. Despite these formal requirements, collaboration between Parliament and SAO remains limited. Apart from receiving SAO reports and financial comments during budget review, the legislature rarely engages with SAO to jointly scrutinize budget execution or evaluate government performance.

Several studies explain this weak relationship. SAO may seek to protect its constitutional independence by minimizing political interactions (Sirisamphan, 2003). Meanwhile, the PAC has its own independent budget and access to external experts, which may reduce its reliance on SAO. Persistent problems include unclear PAC mandates, limited staff expertise, and ineffective communication between the institutions (Sutheewasinnon & Saikaew, 2015; Saikaew, 2009).

International assessments reinforce these findings. The Public Expenditure and Financial Assessment (2009) review noted that Thai parliamentary committees conducted no substantive follow-up on SAO reports. The Open Budget Survey similarly concluded that parliamentary oversight during budget execution remains only moderate and recommended a stronger review of audit findings (International Budget Partnership, 2021).

Weak cooperation has significant consequences. Without coordinated oversight, Thailand faces a growing risk of fiscal mismanagement. SAO's annual reports show rising trends of non-compliance and misuse of public funds—from 60.54 percent of audited entities in 2018 to 72.57 percent in 2022. Common problems include defective contracts, non-use of procured items, poorly designed activities, and failure to meet objectives. Moreover, many agencies do not respond to SAO's recommendations, suggesting that without political power, SAO alone cannot ensure accountability.

Insights from Ferry et al.'s (2023) comparative study help clarify the dynamics of the PAC–SAO relationship in Thailand. Their analysis shows that SAIs operate within a broader “regulatory space,” where audit effectiveness depends not only on formal independence but also on strong institutional linkages with key stakeholders, particularly parliaments. When legislative engagement and follow-up are limited, the impact of performance audits diminishes and audit recommendations are less likely to be implemented. This situation reflects the Thai context, where the SAO enjoys high constitutional independence but receives limited political follow-up from the PAC, contributing to a persistent audit expectation gap. Strengthening cooperation between the two institutions—while preserving the SAO's independence—is therefore essential for improving public financial accountability.

Therefore, this academic article highlights the importance of examining the audit expectation gap (AEG) between the Thai PAC and SAO. By reviewing relevant literature and proposing a study framework, the article seeks to understand how differing expectations may impede cooperation and how closing this gap could improve the PAC's oversight role. The discussion is organized into three parts: (1) the fundamental concept of the PAC, (2) the audit expectation gap, and (3) a proposed framework for studying the Thai PAC in the future.

Part 1: The fundamental concept of the PAC

In parliamentary systems, legislatures typically perform three core functions: representation, legislation, and oversight (Inter-Parliamentary Union, United Nations Development Programme, 2017). Oversight can occur *ex-ante*, by reviewing proposed policies before implementation, or *ex-post*, by examining how policies and public funds are executed.

The PAC is a key *ex-post* oversight mechanism. Its primary responsibilities include scrutinizing government expenditure, ensuring transparency and accountability in public finances, and reviewing SAI reports to strengthen governance (Aldons, 1985). In many jurisdictions, PAC mandates are clearly established: for instance, Australia's Public Accounts and Audit Committee Act 1951 requires PACs to examine all Auditor General reports, while the UK's Exchequer and Audit Departments Act 1866 empowers the PAC to review the work of the Comptroller and Auditor General. Together with SAIs, PACs form the "final stop" in the public financial management cycle (Dubrow, 2020), a defining feature of Westminster-style systems (Wehner, 2003).

The Westminster model has strongly influenced PAC structures worldwide. According to Dr. Sutthi Suntharanurak (personal communication, 2024), a Director of International Affairs Office of SAO, the UK PAC's effectiveness has shaped similar committees across the Commonwealth and beyond. For example, India's PAC systematically examines Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) reports, holds hearings with relevant parties, and monitors the implementation of recommendations, all of which are publicly reported to enhance transparency.

Malaysia's PAC collaborates closely with the National Audit Department (NADM) to clarify audit findings, publicly communicates its conclusions, and receives regular capacity-building sessions from NADM. In the Philippines, the PAC works with the Commission on Audit (COA) to disclose supporting evidence and requires agencies to prepare corrective action plans. South Korea's PAC rigorously reviews major reports from the Board of Audit and Inspection (BAI), conducts hearings, and

follows up on the implementation of recommendations, with all proceedings made public. Indonesia's PAC regularly examines audit reports from the Audit Board (BPK), engages stakeholders, tracks implementation progress, and receives training from BPK to strengthen its oversight capacity.

These international experiences demonstrate that strong and structured PAC–SAI collaboration enhances transparency, accountability, and the overall impact of public audits. As noted by Dr. Sutthi (personal communication, 2024), many PACs and SAIs maintain dedicated communication units, helping minimize misunderstandings and resulting in a narrower expectation gap.

Table 1. Comparison of operations and relationship between PAC and SAI

	Cooperate and review SAI's reports	Follow up SAI's recommendations	Publish reports	Effectively communicate with SAI	Get provided workshop by SAI
India	/	/	/	/	-
Malaysia	/	/	/	/	/
Philippines	/	/	/	/	-
South Korea	/	/	/	/	-
Indonesia	/	/	/	/	/
Thailand	-	-	/	-	-

Source: Interview with Dr. Sutthi Suntharanurak, Director of International Affairs Office, the State Audit Office of the Kingdom of Thailand

Thailand, although not part of the Commonwealth, has adopted a parliamentary system since 1932. The first formal study of the Thai PAC was conducted in 2003. Sirisamphan (2003) explains that the Constitution grants Parliament authority to legislate, vote on government confidence, and oversee government budgets and expenditures. Parliamentary budget control occurs in two stages: pre-control, through an ad hoc committee reviewing the budget proposal, and post-control, through the PAC, which monitors expenditure after implementation.

Under the 1997 Constitution, the PAC comprised two types of committees: a Standing Committee, consisting solely of members of Parliament and operating throughout the parliamentary term, and a Select Committee, which included both MPs and external experts and was dissolved after completing specific tasks. Despite this structure, the PAC rarely examined emerging issues such as the efficiency or effectiveness of public spending. Instead, it focused mainly on comparing current expenditures with previous years, with little attention to “value for money.” As a result, its work was largely retrospective rather than proactive.

Research by Setthabut et al. (2003) notes that PAC authority was not clearly defined in constitutional or legislative rules, leading to ambiguity in roles and responsibilities. Suthatip et al. (2005) further observe that the PAC lacked sufficient information for thorough scrutiny, resulting in

reports with limited practical impact—problems that undermine public confidence and accountability over time.

Under the 2007 Constitution, the PAC had the authority to summon witnesses and demand documents, and in practice, many agencies were asked to provide extensive raw data. Because much of this information was not synthesized, the committee required significant time to review financial documents, often limiting its ability to examine budget execution efficiently (Sangdetch, 2010). The PAC also conducted hearings, sent formal letters requesting clarification, and organized seminars with experts on complex issues.

However, due to limited communication with SAO, the PAC struggled to conduct meaningful follow-up on Auditor General reports (Saikaew, 2009). Staffing challenges further weakened PAC performance. Many staff lacked practical knowledge of public administration, budget systems, and report writing skills (Jitbun, 2012).

The most recent comprehensive study of the Thai PAC (Sutheewasinnon & Saikaew, 2015) reviewed the committee's powers, practices, relationship with the SAI, meeting procedures, and resources. Given Thailand's bicameral system, the PAC is divided into two committees—one for the House of Representatives and one for the Senate. Both committees may order document retrieval and require individuals to provide testimony. After each review, the committee secretary summarizes resolutions for Parliament, and reports are posted publicly. Although agencies typically respond formally to PAC reports, the government rarely takes concrete action on PAC recommendations. No systematic follow-up mechanism exists, and collaboration between the PAC and the Auditor General remains limited. The two bodies neither share information consistently nor use each other's reports. Consequently, Thai PACs fall short of the ideal characteristics of PACs described in international models.

Under the 2017 Constitution, PAC responsibilities are outlined in Article 90(14) and Section 5 of the 2019 Parliamentary Rules of Procedure. The PAC is mandated to review budget processes and oversee annual revenues and expenditures of government agencies and state enterprises. However, analysis of meeting reports from the current PAC (appointed in 2023) reveals three persistent issues:

- 1) The Committee places a greater emphasis on ensuring compliance with financial regulations and monitoring the timeliness of project implementation by government agencies, rather than focusing on the value for money, efficiency, or effectiveness of budget utilization. The Committee typically requests documents and evidence from government agencies to confirm adherence to financial regulations or to explain delays in project execution. Ultimately, the Committee tends to

provide broad recommendations, such as adhering to regulations, considering stakeholders' interests, or delegating responsibilities to the relevant parties to address issues appropriately.

2) The Committee prioritizes answerability, or the capacity to provide information, over enforcement as outlined in the principle of accountability discussed in the introduction. This practice indicates a redundancy with the primary responsibilities of SAO, which is tasked with auditing and requesting documentation to ensure budgetary compliance. Furthermore, there is no evidence suggesting that the Committee has exerted political authority to pressure or oversee government agencies in implementing the SAO's recommendations.

3) The Committee makes minimal use of the SAO's audit findings. From the 41 documented meetings, SAO representatives attended only eight sessions, and there was only one instance where the Committee requested the SAO to conduct additional investigations. This reflects a lack of effective communication and coordination between the two entities.

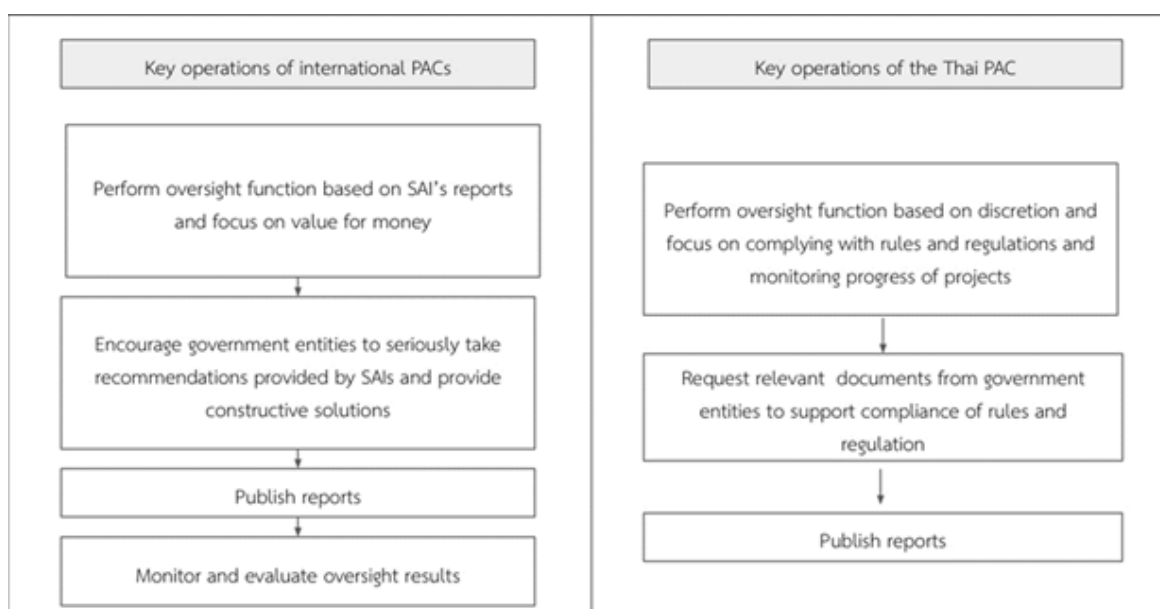


Figure 1. Comparison of Key Operations between International PACs and the Thai PAC

Source: Sutheewasinnon and Saikew (2015)

The literature reviewed above highlights the roles, duties, and good practices of PACs in promoting accountability within public financial management, as well as how the Thai PAC has operated over time. Evidence shows that from the 1997 Constitution through at least the 2015 Constitution. The functions and operations of the Thai PAC have changed very little. Notably, the PAC has continued to overlook value-for-money considerations and has not collaborated effectively with

SAO to hold the government accountable. This persistent disconnect suggests that the PAC may hold different expectations of the SAO, which hinder effective cooperation. An audit expectation gap thus provides a useful framework for explaining this situation.

Part 2: Audit Expectation Gap (AEG)

The concept of the audit expectations gap (AEG) emerged in the United States in the early 1970s, when the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) was tasked with clarifying the appropriate roles and responsibilities of auditors. This initiative sought to determine whether a mismatch existed between what the public expected—or needed—from auditors and what auditors could reasonably be expected to deliver (Humphrey, 1997). Building on this concern, Liggio (1974) offered one of the earliest definitions of the AEG, framing it as the gap between users' expectations of auditor performance and auditors' own perceptions of their duties. He attributed this gap to differing assumptions about the quality, standards, and objectives of the auditing profession.

Subsequent scholarship reinforced the idea that ambiguity surrounding the purpose and scope of audits fuels misunderstanding. Humphrey et al. (1992) argued that statutory financial audits have long been perceived inconsistently by auditors and users alike, creating persistent uncertainty about what audits actually accomplish. This divergence between actual audit practice and stakeholder expectations is central to what they describe as the AEG.

Porter (1993) later refined the concept by asserting that earlier definitions were too limited because they ignored the possibility of substandard auditor performance. She proposed a more comprehensive framework comprising two components: the performance gap and the reasonableness gap. The performance gap arises either from deficient performance—when auditors fail to comply with existing professional or legal standards—or from deficient standards, in which the standards themselves do not require auditors to undertake procedures that users could reasonably expect. The reasonableness gap, in contrast, captures the difference between expectations that are reasonable—those meeting a cost-benefit criterion and thus addressable through improved standards or performance—and expectations that are unreasonable because they exceed what auditors can feasibly or appropriately provide.

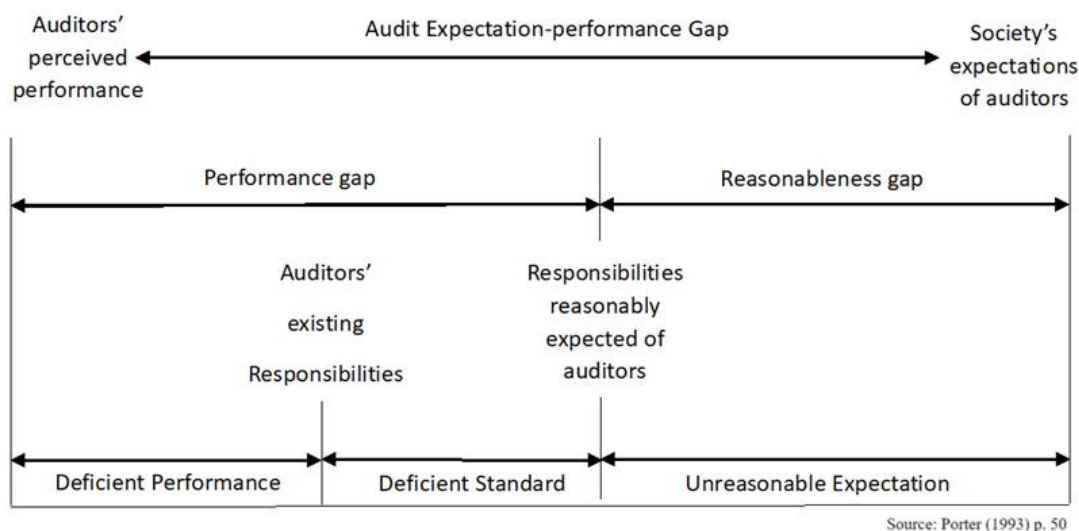


Figure 2. Concept of Audit Expectation Gap

Source: Porter (1993)

Based on this concept, the AEG arises from both the auditor's side and the users' side. Sikka et al. (1998) argue that as the social and regulatory context of auditing evolves, auditors must demonstrate the relevance of their work through interaction with political leaders, public officials, investors, and other stakeholders. If auditors fail to adjust their practices to align with changing expectations—especially when new laws or standards are introduced—public confidence may erode. Thus, auditors must remain responsive to shifting societal expectations to maintain credibility.

From the users' perspective, Koh and Woo (1998) note that the public often places unrealistically high demands on auditors, sometimes viewing them as enforcers of financial rules rather than independent reporters of organizational activities. This misconception is especially common among non-auditors who lack a clear understanding of audit roles and responsibilities, thereby contributing to the AEG.

Ruhnke and Schmidt (2014) offer a more recent perspective by identifying three sources of the AEG, consistent with Porter's (1993) findings: failure of the public, when users hold unrealistic expectations; failure of auditors, when auditors do not meet their professional responsibilities; and failure of standard-setters, when auditing standards fail to keep pace with contextual changes. These factors collectively explain why gaps persist between what stakeholders expect from audits and what auditors are able or required to provide.

The failure of the public remains a central contributor to the AEG. Porter et al. (2012) note that this occurs when users expect auditors to perform duties beyond what is reasonable or feasible. Gray et al. (2011) further attribute this problem to limited public understanding, emphasizing three key sources: a lack of clarity in audit reports that makes it difficult for users to grasp the scope and implications of audit findings; frequent misinterpretation of core audit terminology—such as “reasonable assurance,” “materiality,” and “sampling”—which leads to inflated expectations; and superficial engagement with audit reports, where users pay attention only to the audit opinion or the auditing firm rather than examining the full content. Together, these factors contribute significantly to unrealistic expectations and widen the AEG.

While the AEG has been extensively studied in the private sector, several scholars have demonstrated that similar gaps also arise within public-sector auditing. Early work by Chowdhury and Innes (1998) identified a wide range of factors contributing to the AEG in Bangladesh’s public sector, including delayed audit reporting, limited independence of the Supreme Audit Institution (SAI), weak communication channels, inconsistencies in the scope of performance audits, unclear reporting formats, insufficient auditor competence, and misunderstandings about auditees’ objectives. Some of these issues parallel those found in private-sector auditing—such as concerns over fraud detection, auditor independence, and audit judgment—while others stem from the unique institutional complexities of public-sector governance.

Building on this foundation, Chowdhury et al. (2005) conducted a quantitative study using an accountability-based framework to examine the AEG in Bangladesh’s public sector more systematically. Their findings revealed clear gaps across multiple areas, including reporting, accountability, auditor independence and competence, audit evidence, materiality, fraud detection, and audit judgment. By analyzing six core audit concepts—auditor independence, auditor competence, materiality, evidence, true and fair view, and performance auditing—the study highlighted structural and institutional weaknesses that contribute to persistent expectation gaps between auditors and key stakeholders in the public sector.

In a similar vein, Daud (2007) investigated the Malaysian public sector by examining perceptions from a broader set of stakeholders—including auditors, PAC members, auditees, journalists, politicians, and academics. Drawing on Chowdhury’s (1998) framework and Porter’s (1993) model, Daud assessed six components of auditing: independence, competence, audit scope, auditor ethics, audit reporting, and auditing standards. The study found that the AEG existed in every dimension. On the auditor side, the gap was linked to challenges such as auditors’ reluctance to

assume fraud detection responsibilities and the growing reliance on non-audit services. On the user side, unrealistic expectations and misunderstandings—largely due to limited knowledge about audit functions—emerged as key drivers of the gap. Together, these studies demonstrate that the AEG is not confined to private-sector auditing, but is equally present and often more complex in the public sector due to institutional constraints and governance dynamics.

In Thailand, prior studies consistently note limited communication between the PAC and the SAO and the PAC's neglect of value-for-money concerns—issues that hinder good oversight practices (Sutheewasinnon & Saikaew, 2015). These findings align with broader trends in performance auditing, which has expanded the responsibilities of PACs in many jurisdictions (Guthrie & Parker, 1999). Fiedler (2004) also stresses that a close relationship between Parliament and the Auditor-General is essential for effective public accountability.

When considered together, these insights suggest that an AEG likely exists between the Thai PAC—as a primary user of audit reports—and the SAO as the auditor. Confirming the presence of this gap and identifying its causes are therefore essential for understanding how to strengthen oversight and improve public financial management in Thailand.

Part 3: The proposed framework of study for the future research.

Building on this relevant literature, the following section proposes a structured framework for analyzing the expectation gap between the Thai PAC and SAO.

The proposed framework consists of two main parts. The first part examines the institutional context of the Thai PAC under the 2017 Constitution. Previous constitutions saw PAC operations diverge from the ideal models and best practices identified in comparative research. Following the recommendations of Sutheewasinnon and Saikaew (2015), it is therefore essential to reassess the PAC's present structure, functions, and institutional context. This section focuses on analyzing the PAC's establishment and legal mandate, powers and responsibilities, membership and leadership, staffing arrangements, relationship with the SAO, sources of inquiry, and oversight practices.

This analysis could be conducted primarily through direct observation of PAC meetings and a systematic review of relevant documents, including legislation, parliamentary rules, committee minutes, and PAC resolutions. These methods could be complemented by interviews with PAC secretariat staff to verify and contextualize the findings.



Figure 3. The proposed framework of study: Part I Institutional Context

The second part applies the concept of the AEG to the relationship between the Thai PAC and the SAO. It seeks to identify whether an AEG exists between these two actors—the PAC as a key user of audit reports and the SAO as the auditor—and to determine its causes. In theory, an AEG arises when the expectations of auditors and users are not aligned. In Thailand, long-standing limited communication between the PAC and SAO suggests the potential for such a gap. The study will therefore examine eight dimensions: SAO reports, accountability, auditor independence, auditor competence, audit materiality, audit evidence, the notion of a “true and fair view,” and performance auditing. It will also explore whether any identified gaps stem primarily from failures on the part of the public (users), auditors, or standard-setters.

To carry this out, a semi-structured interview approach could be employed, incorporating ranking measures to assess expectations regarding public sector auditing, particularly performance audits. An identical set of questions and rating items will be administered to both PAC and SAO members to enable direct comparison. Respondents will rank scores using a seven-point scale based on their perceptions. The interviews could also explore potential sources of the AEG—whether stemming from the public, auditors, or standards—by comparing responses with relevant laws and the International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions (ISSAIs). The interview protocol will include both open- and closed-ended questions to capture quantifiable assessments alongside explanatory insights.

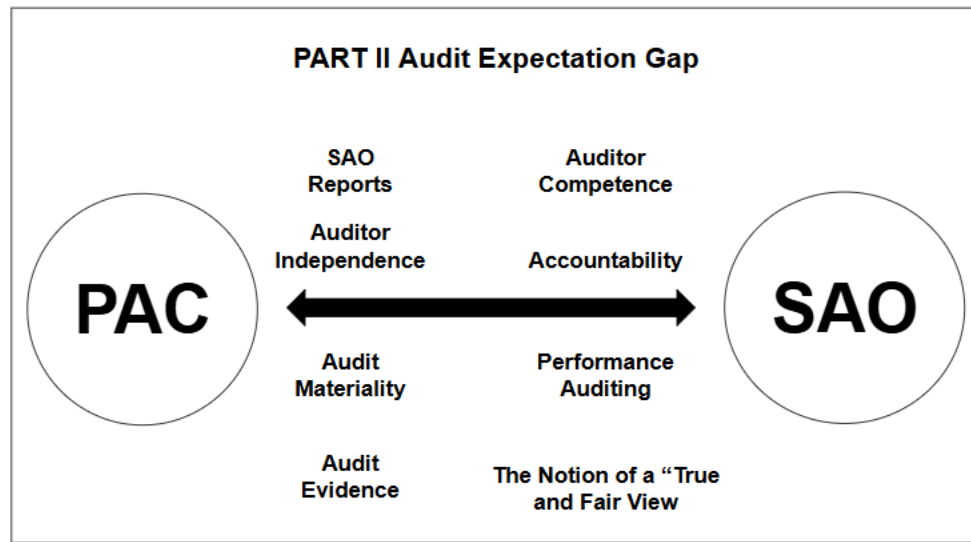


Figure 4. The proposed framework of study: Part II Audit Expectation Gap

Lastly, data analysis is a critical component of qualitative research, as the rigor of a study depends not only on how data are collected but also on the systematic and appropriate techniques applied during analysis. Given that this study relies primarily on documentary review and in-depth interviews, content analysis—particularly through thematic categorization—serves as the main analytical approach. In addition, part of the data consists of rankings on a 7-point ordinal scale from a relatively small sample. To assess whether an AEG exists, the study could employ the Mann–Whitney U test, a non-parametric alternative to the t-test that is well-suited for ordinal data. This test determines whether two independent groups come from the same population and is considered more robust than a median test because it incorporates rank information.

Taken together, these components deepen our understanding of the PAC-SAO relationship and whether both institutions regard public sector auditing as a core mechanism for enhancing accountability.

Conclusion and Implication

The relationship between the PAC and the SAI is fundamental to effective public financial management. These institutions reinforce each other’s roles: the PAC relies on audit findings as a primary source of inquiry, while SAIs depend on the PAC’s political authority to ensure that public agencies act on audit recommendations. Strong collaboration between the two ultimately enhances accountability and improves the quality of public administration.

However, the literature on the Thai PAC shows that its functions and operations diverge significantly from international good practices. In particular, the Thai PAC does not work closely with SAO to hold government entities accountable and pays little attention to value-for-money considerations. This disconnect suggests a potential expectations gap between the two institutions. To strengthen the PAC's oversight capacity, it is therefore necessary to examine the AEG and identify its underlying causes.

This study proposes a two-part framework for examining the expectation gap between the Thai PAC and the SAO. The first part reassesses the PAC's institutional context under the 2017 Constitution—its mandate, powers, composition, staffing, relationship with the SAO, and oversight practices—using observations of PAC meetings, documentary review, and interviews with PAC secretariat staff. The second part applies the AEG concept to assess whether the PAC and SAO hold misaligned expectations across eight dimensions, including reporting, accountability, independence, competence, materiality, evidence, the “true and fair view,” and performance auditing. Semi-structured interviews with both groups, using a common seven-point rating scale, will enable comparison of expectations and help identify whether any gaps stem from users, auditors, or standard-setters. Thematic content analysis and the Mann–Whitney U test will be used to analyze qualitative insights and ordinal ranking data, respectively.

Studying the AEG between the Thai PAC and SAO offers at least two important contributions. Firstly, no prior research has examined AEG within the Thai public sector, particularly between key horizontal accountability institutions such as the PAC and the SAO. Existing scholarship on the AEG in Thailand has been concentrated almost exclusively in the domain of financial auditing within private-sector contexts. For example, Chinpuvadol and Boonyanet (2020) examines the audit expectation gap in Thailand by comparing auditors' and financial statement users' perceptions of auditors' roles and responsibilities, while Pungboonpanich and Jadesadalug (2020) demonstrates substantial gaps among auditors, business owners, and financial institutions regarding the expected scope and quality of audit work. Although these studies provide valuable insights into how expectation gaps emerge, their focus on corporate financial reporting limits their applicability to the public sector, where auditing serves broader governance and accountability functions. Therefore, examining the AEG between the PAC and SAO fills a critical gap in the literature and extends the concept of expectation gaps to an institutional setting that has not been previously explored in Thailand.

Secondly, the study could encourage improvements in oversight practices by clarifying the expectations of each institution and highlighting the need for collaboration rather than isolated

operation. Strengthened cooperation between the Thai PAC and SAO would allow the PAC to scrutinize government agencies using credible, evidence-based information, while ensuring that the SAO's recommendations receive the political follow-up necessary to promote corrective action—thereby enhancing Thailand's public financial management and mitigating recurring problems of noncompliance, misuse, and mismanagement of public resources. Nevertheless, such collaboration must be carefully calibrated. Comparative studies of high-performing SAIs show that although engagement with legislatures can significantly amplify the impact of audit work, SAIs must preserve a clear institutional distance to safeguard their independence and avoid undue political influence. Excessive closeness risks what Pierre and de Fine Licht (2019) conceptualize as systemic capture, in which an audit body gradually internalizes the perspectives or interests of the institutions it oversees. For Thailand, this means that while closer PAC–SAO coordination is essential for improving the follow-up and implementation of audit recommendations, the SAO must remain sufficiently autonomous to prevent being perceived—or used—as a political instrument, ensuring that its oversight remains credible, impartial, and protected from partisan agendas.

Finally, this study anticipates identifying a substantial AEG between the Thai PAC and the SAO. Such a gap—whether driven by failure of the public, failure of auditors, or failure of standard-setters—signals a structural weakness in Thailand's horizontal accountability system. As an initial and practical step toward narrowing this gap, a “quick-win” solution would be the establishment of a formal joint working group between the PAC and the SAO. This mechanism would create a structured channel for regular dialogue, clarification of expectations, and coordination on audit follow-up. Through consistent interaction, both institutions would gain a clearer understanding of each other's roles, constraints, and responsibilities within Thailand's public financial management framework. In the long term, such institutionalized communication could enhance the use of audit reports, strengthen oversight practices, and reinforce the broader accountability architecture of the Thai public sector.

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