Panel Description

This panel brings together researchers who have individually examined aspects of Thai education in its socio-political settings. The overall objective of the panel is to situate education and educational problems in Thailand in its broader political context, by engaging with various social and political theories ranging from the state to post-colonialism. The panel’s theme – The Politics of Thai Education – indicates the shared focus of the four papers on issues of power relationships, structural constraints, and the contest among social forces and the discourse for hegemonic positioning within the Thai education system. In one way or another, each paper addresses the key questions of why educational arrangements in Thailand are the way they are today; how they are related to the global and local political forces, whose interests they are meant to serve; what mechanisms of control are at play, what are the structural limits of teaching and learning in Thailand, and, finally, how those limits might have manifested differently. The particular topics to be examined in this panel include the Thai state in higher education, neoliberalism, standardized testing, and quality assurance in the Thai higher education. It is hoped that this panel discussion will generate accounts of the Thai education that depart from technical debate on educational outcomes and educational management to the ones which have broader focus on state and society.