**20-264R, “The Political Origins of Education Decentralization”**

Reviewer 1

The author has comprehensively addressed the reviewer comments. With the significant improvements, I recommend publication with three minor revisions.

Provide a concise definition of decentralization, in an endnote. Clearly define the similarities and differences between decentralization, in general, and education decentralization, specifically.

Revise the title. Perhaps “Decentralization as a Political Weapon: Education Politics in El Salvador and Paraguay.”

The name dropping is distracting and unnecessary. Cut it back, only mentioning the name or names of the scholars whose work is most central to this research (i.e., Hertel-Fernandez).

Reviewer 2  
I commend the author for doing a great job addressing the reviewer comments. I continue to like this paper a lot and believe it is an important contribution. That said, I believe there are still some very minor issues that need to be addressed before this is in publishable form.

There are a few sentences that do not make sense and obscure the author’s meaning. On page 6, the author writes, “the untold story of the 1980s is that the region experienced no reversals in primary school coverage – a remarkable achievement.” Is the author saying that because there was no reversal, a technical explanation doesn’t work? This doesn’t make sense to me. Couldn’t it just be that overall primary school levels were relatively low and therefore there might have been technical reasons to pursue decentralization? I find this paragraph confusing and unconvincing.

On page 11, the author writes, “But in weak democracies, incumbents leverage whatever tools

they have at their disposal to shift the playing field their way. Aside from courting voters

by targeting policies to supporters, incumbents are likely to advance policies that weaken

their electoral opponents, including the implementation of voting restrictions and result

manipulation.” Voting restrictions and other policies that weaken electoral opponents are certainly used in advanced democracies. The author should nuance their language to make clear they aren’t suggesting that these things only occur in weak democracies (which would contradict Hertel-Fernandez’s core argument).

On page 12, the author writes, “For example, in 2000 and 2004 the Centro dos Professores do estado do Rio Grande do Sul went on strike against the PT despite their close electoral alliance.” The author should state that this example comes from Brazil.

On page 18, the author uses the term “FPL” without defining it.

Figure 2 is unclear – it needs a legend and some explanation of what the y-axis measures. Just stating it in the text is not enough – a figure in a published academic journal should be able to stand alone.