



Translation, Intensification and Fabrication: Professional Academy Football Coaches' Enactment of the Elite Player Performance Plan

Journal:	<i>Sport, Education and Society</i>
Manuscript ID	CSES-2019-0220.R2
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	Policy enactment, elite sport, coaching, intensification, fabrication, policy enactment, elite sport, coaching, intensification, fabrication, football, performativity

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Coach	Coach A	Coach B	Coach C	Coach D	Coach E	Coach F	Coach G	Coach H	Coach I	Coach J	Coach K	Coach L
Age	30	22	29	28	24	37	42	28	40	38	28	32
Coaching academy age group	U10's	U9's	U13's	U16's	U11's	U9s	U10s	U14s	U12s	U9s	U13s	U15s
Postgraduate education award in sport	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Undergraduate education award in sport	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Highest coaching award	UEFA B	UEFA B	UEFA B	UEFA B	UEFA B	UEFA B	UEFA B	UEFA A	UEFA B	L2	UEFA B	UEFA B
F.A. Youth Award	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Working	Yes	Yes	Working	Working	Yes
Years' coaching experience	10	3	10	13	7	15	18	8	18	8	5	10
Years coaching at the Academy	2	2	7	3	3	3	12	6	8	6	2	3

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3 1 **Translation, Intensification and Fabrication: Professional Football Academy Coaches'**
4 **Enactment of the Elite Player Performance Plan**
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The micro-level enactment of elite sport policy has received little critical coverage in the sociology of sport subdiscipline. This paper provides original insights into how coaches working in professional youth football academies variously interpreted, experienced, and engaged with The FA Premier League's Elite Player Performance Plan (EPPP). In-depth, cyclical interviews were used to generate data for this study. The transcripts were rigorously analysed using an iterative-phronetic approach, with Ball's critical theorising on policy enactment providing the primary heuristic framework. Our analysis highlighted the challenging nature of coaches' engagement with, and enactment of, this policy. Specifically, the findings address a) the intensification of the participants' work-based tasks and duties, b) increased accountability for player outcomes, c) a loss in their professional autonomy and raised levels of managerial surveillance, d) their strategic use of fabrications to represent themselves and their respective academies in favourable and policy compliant ways to those that scrutinised their work. The findings also raise further questions regarding the need to better understand a) the role of sports coaches in elite sport policy processes, especially when undertaking second order administrative activities alongside their primary coaching roles and b) the reasons why sports coaches continue to toil (or not) in workplaces characterised by increasing intensification and performance evaluation. Relatedly, Moreover, how and in what ways the products of coaches' work in these situations is understood and utilised by those in authoritative positions in elite sport requires critical consideration.

Keywords

Policy enactment, elite sport, coaching, performativity, intensification, fabrication

Introduction

In recent years, critical policy scholars (e.g., Hallsen & Karlsson, 2019; Purcell, 2019; Singh, Heimans & Glasswell, 2014) have increasingly examined the social complexity of the policy cycle. This work has not only challenged the overly functionalistic accounts of policy making and delivery that had traditionally characterised the literature base but has helped to bridge the dichotomy between ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ examinations of policy work (O’Gorman, 2011; Skille, 2008). At the heart of such inquiry is the recognition that policy actors are much more than ciphers who implement policy in a sequential and unproblematic manner (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012; Sing, Pini & Glasswell, 2018). Instead, they are able to actively interpret (e.g., read and make sense of policy texts) and enact (e.g., in and through talk, meetings, data walls, and documentation) policy in a variety ways, subject to the constraints and opportunities of their context (Ball et al., 2012; Braun, Ball & Maguire, 2011; Singh et al., 2014). Here, situated contexts (e.g., locale, organisational history), professional and occupational cultures (e.g., values, workers positioning, experiences in, and commitment to, an organisation), material contexts (e.g., infrastructure, budgets, technology, and staffing) and external contexts (e.g., pressures and expectations from broader policy context, such as the inspection, quantification, and ranking of performance) can inform how policies may be interpreted and enacted in various ways by policy actors within, and across, organisations (Ball et al., 2012; Braun et al., 2011; Maguire, Gerwitz, Towers, & Neumann, 2019; Singh et al., 2014).

Importantly, this evolving body of critical policy scholarship has increasingly highlighted the performativity that is associated with neoliberal policy directives and initiatives (e.g., Gobby, Keddie & Blackmore, 2018; Singh, 2018; Viczko & Riveros, 2015). Performativity is understood as regulatory mechanism that incentivises, controls, and shapes actions through comparisons, judgements, rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic) (Ball, 2003, p. 220). The mechanics of performative control experienced by policy actors can include ‘the appraisal meeting, the annual review, report writing, the regular publication of results and promotion applications, inspections and peer reviews’ (Ball (2005, p. 220). It has been demonstrated that policy actors’ attempts to fulfil their obligations in these particular ways may lead to them to utilise fabrications in everyday working practices; a ‘spectacle’ (Ball, 2003, p. 222)., or an ‘enacted fantasy’ (ibid) that is provided simply to be seen and judged by others. The consequences of performativity are not only illustrated in the strategic interactions of

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3 1 policy workers (Mulcahy, 2015). Indeed, increasing levels of performance management,
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5 2 workplace surveillance, and insecure employment conditions have impacted detrimentally
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7 3 upon the social and psychological well-being of policy actors (Ives, Gale, Potrac, & Nelson, in
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9 4 press; Roderick, Smith & Potrac, 2017).

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12 6 To date, there remains a paucity of similar critical research addressing the enactment of sport
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14 7 policies. While some important initial insights have demonstrated how different types of policy
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16 8 actors and advocates challenge, resist and/or integrate policies in various community sport
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18 9 settings (e.g., Hammond, Penney & Jeanes 2019; Ives, Gale, Nelson & Potrac, 2016; Jeanes,
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20 10 Spaaij, Magee, Farquharson, Gorman & Lusher, 2018, 2019), the micro-level enactment of
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22 11 elite sport policy has been largely unexamined in the literature base. Instead, scholarship in this
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24 12 topic area has largely concentrated on the study of ‘successful’ elite sport systems (e.g., De
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26 13 Bosscher, Shibli, Westerbeek, & Van Bottenburg, 2015) and issues related to elite sport policy
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28 14 learning and transfer (e.g., Green & Houlihan 2005; Houlihan & Green, 2008). Little attention
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30 15 has thus far been afforded to examining how elite sport policy involves ‘negotiation,
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32 16 contestation or struggle between different groups who lie outside the formal machinery of
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34 17 official policymaking’ (Ozga, 2000, p. 113). Relatedly, there has been little consideration of
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36 18 the coaching policy-practice nexus or coaches as policy actors in elite sport (inclusive of their
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38 19 sense making, actions, and emotions) (Hammond et al., 2019; Ives et al., 2016). This is
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40 20 somewhat surprising, as within the context of elite sport, it is coaches who are often central to
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42 21 the delivery of policy objectives and priorities (Liston, Gregg & Lowther, 2013).

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44 23 In responding to the situation described above, this paper provides original knowledge
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46 24 regarding coaches’ enactment of an elite sport policy. Specifically, we share the findings of an
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48 25 in-depth, interview-based study that considered 12 part-time professional football academy
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50 26 coaches’ experiences of enacting the English Premier League’s (EPL) youth development
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52 27 policy; ‘The Elite Player Performance Plan’ (EPPP). This investigation was primarily
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54 28 concerned with exploring how these coaches a) read and made sense of the EPPP, b) variously
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56 29 experienced and enacted the EPPP in their respective organisational settings, and c) understood
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58 30 and responded to the performative dimensions of this particular form of policy work. We hope
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60 31 such insights act as a productive stimulus for a) challenging the popular assumptions regarding
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33 32 the unidirectional implementation of elite sport policy, especially as it relates to the learning
and development of children and young people, and b) encouraging a greater, critical focus on

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3 1 the everyday micro-level challenges and dilemmas experienced by sports workers charged with
4 2 facilitating various policy goals and priorities.
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8 4 ***The EPPP*** 9 10 5

11 6 Following the publication of the Lewis Report (2007), which critically examined the
12 7 development of young players in English professional football, the EPPP was devised in 2011
13 8 and is currently being implemented in professional English football academies. The EPPP was
14 9 developed in the context of the perceived, consistent failures of male senior and youth England
15 10 national teams at international tournaments, as well as a corresponding view that coaches and
16 11 coaching in English youth football academies had not adequately equipped home-grown
17 12 players with the necessary attributes to succeed at the highest levels of competitive football
18 13 (Green 2009; Mills, Butt, Maynard & Harwood, 2012). Couched in terms of ‘enhanced
19 14 efficiency’, ‘value for money’, and long-term ‘financial viability’ (Premier League, 2011, p.
20 15 12) of the academy system, the EPPP intends ‘to foster a working environment that promotes
21 16 excellence, nurtures talented young players and systematically converts talent into more and
22 17 better professional ‘home grown players’ (ibid). This policy has specific implications for
23 18 coaches. These include a requirement for professional football clubs to create more time for
24 19 players to play and be coached, improved quality of coaching provision, and the
25 20 implementation of a system of effective measurement and quality assurance (The Premier
26 21 League, 2011, p. 29).
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23 The EPL distributes funding to academies based on the assessment of 10 key performance
24 24 indicators that establish academy categorisation on a scale of 1 to 4 (The Premier League, 2011,
25 25 p. 31). Among the factors used to determine this overall judgement are the level of coaches’
26 26 qualifications and the ‘quality’ of their working practices. Professional football academy
27 27 coaches must be educated to minimum level 3 standard on The English Football Association’s
28 28 coach education pathway, demonstrated by achieving the Union of European Football
29 29 Associations (UEFA) B and FA Youth Module 3 certificatesⁱ. The quality of coaches’ work is
30 30 measured and recorded in relation to player development and progression to professional
31 31 contracts and first team appearances. Academies are evaluated every 3 years by an independent
32 32 auditor, Foot Passⁱⁱ. Classified as optimum development models, Category 1 academies receive
33 33 most funding, provide up to 8500 hours of coaching coaching hours for players, a wider range
34 34 of sport science support, and are licensed to recruit and develop players from 5-21 years of age.

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3 1 In contrast, Category 4 academies are classified as late development models, receive least
4 2 funding, provide fewer coaching hours, and are restricted to recruiting and developing players
5 3 in the 16-21 years' age range (Webb, Dicks, Brown & O'Gorman, in press).
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10 5 In recent years, the EPPP has attracted some scholarly attention. Topics of inquiry have
11 6 included talent identification (Reeves, Littlewood, McRobert & Roberts, 2018), the
12 7 developmental experiences of academy graduate professional footballers (Webb et al., in press)
13 8 injury incidence and characteristics (Tears, Chesterton & Wijnbergen, 2018), and
14 9 psychological support for players (Sulley & Nesti, 2014). On this topic, Champ, Nesti,
15 10 Ronkainen, Tod and Littlewood (2018) problematized the formalization of sport psychology
16 11 roles and suggested that the policy was having no discernible impact on changing the traditional
17 12 authoritarian and masculine culture within one category 2 professional football academy.
18 13 Alternatively, Roe and Parker (2016) explored the adoption of a sports chaplain in one Premier
19 14 League professional football academy as a means of providing the holistic support of youth
20 15 players required by the EPPP. Here, confidential pastoral support provided by the chaplain was
21 16 found to assist young players' efforts to manage and negotiate the day-to-day challenges of life
22 17 within a highly competitive organisational context. However, there has thus far been no critical
23 18 examination of how the EPPP is interpreted and enacted by coaches, who are one of the primary
24 19 policy actor groups in this context.
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21 **Methods**

23 ***Participant Selection and Recruitment***

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25 As a direct consequence of our employment as part-time professional football academy
26 26 coaches, we, the first and second authors, had direct experience of the changes to coaches' roles
27 27 required by the EPPP. Alongside this, our discussions with fellow part-time coaches regarding
28 28 the impact of this policy, helped sensitise the research team to specific issues that mattered (c.f.
29 29 Tracy, 2018) to coaches. Given our existing connections to the context, a combination of
30 30 convenience and purposive sampling (Teddie & Yu, 2007) techniques were utilised to recruit
31 31 information rich participants (Etikan, Musa & Alkass, 2016). Through the first and second
32 32 authors' local networks of fellow academy coaches, two initial participants were conveniently
33 33 sampled from two academies other than their own. Each of the academies had attained
34 34 Category 3 status just prior to the research study beginning at the end of the 2014/15 football

1 season and were not due for further auditing or re-categorisation until 2018 after the study had
2 ceased. The two initial participants assisted in identifying other coaches from their respective
3 academies to participate in this study. Coaches were deemed eligible if they were, a) currently
4 employed as a youth coach in a professional football academy, b) actively coaching academy
5 players between the ages of 9-18 years, and c) had worked in the academy system prior to the
6 introduction of the EPPP and continued to be employed in the academy system during its
7 implementation. Following institutional ethical approval from the corresponding author's
8 institution, the first and second author began the process of recruitment. Eligible participants
9 were identified, contacted in person, and presented with relevant information (i.e., the aims of
10 the study, methods used, ethical arrangements, and the nature and extent of participant
11 involvement). Whilst all coaches employed at both academies (part-time and full-time) were
12 approached, a sample of twelve male part-time academy football coaches working in two,
13 Category 3 football academies replied and were ultimately recruited.

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15 [INSERT TABLE OF PARTICIPANTS SOMEWHERE HERE]

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17 In line with the host University's guidelines, the ethical dimensions of the study were discussed
18 with all participants prior to data collection. Each participant subsequently provided written
19 and verbal informed consent. To protect the anonymity of participants, as well as those of other
20 individuals and organisations that they discussed, codes (e.g. Coach A) were used throughout
21 the study to disguise the identity of the coaches (Purdy, 2014).

22 23 ***Data Collection: in-depth interviews***

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25 As our intention was to understand the meanings that the participants attached to their own and
26 others' actions (Potrac, Jones & Nelson, 2014) when enacting the EPPP, face-to-face, one-to-
27 one in-depth interviews were deemed the most appropriate method for generating data.
28 Initially, the first and second author each conducted a pilot face-to-face, unstructured interview
29 with the initial two coaches. These occurred during the pre-season of 2014/15 (June-September
30 2014). Here, questions such as 'what is your view of the EPPP?' and 'What issues do you
31 think the EPPP will raise?' were asked. This encouraged spontaneous dialogue between the
32 researchers and the participants which elicited issues about the EPPP in messy but detailed
33 ways (Sparkes & Smith, 2014, p. 85). The research team then met to discuss the issues raised
34 in the pilot interviews and used them to develop and refine an in-depth semi structured

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3 1 interview guide that focused on, a) how the participants initially interpreted and responded to
4 2 the EPPP, b) how the EPPP impacted on their coaching work and life outside of football, and
5 3 c) how the coaches sought to enact the EPPP in relation to significant others (e.g., fellow
6 4 coaches, academy managers).
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11 6 The first and second authors then utilised this interview guide to underpin the first round of
12 7 interviews with all twelve participants. The focus during this phase of data generation centred
13 8 on initial understandings of the impact of the EPPP. Questions asked included ‘How did you
14 9 initially come to learn about the EPPP?’, ‘What was the anticipated impact of the EPPP on
15 10 yourself and your academy?’, ‘Will your role and that of others in the academy change with
16 11 the introduction of the EPPP?’. A second round of interviews were then held with all
17 12 participants during the season of August 2015 – May 2016. This allowed the research team to
18 13 follow-up on issues raised during the first round of interviews as well as explore new lines of
19 14 inquiry related to the impact of audit, inspection and categorisation on the participants’
20 15 everyday working practices. These interviews considered questions such as ‘How has the EPPP
21 16 impacted on your coaching?’, and ‘What is required of you during the audit and categorisation
22 17 process?’. A third, and final, round of interviews with six of the participants were conducted
23 18 between June and December 2017 to follow up on topics specifically raised in relation to the
24 19 EPPP formal audit process. Here, our line of questioning included, ‘How did you act prior to
25 20 and during the audit?’, ‘Why did you behave in this way?’ ‘What was at stake for you and the
26 21 club during the audit process and inspection?’.
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41 23 Throughout the data generation process, detail oriented, elaboration and clarification probes
42 24 were used to gain additional information from participants (Sparkes & Smith, 2014, p. 93).
43 25 These enabled the interviewers to delve deeper into the participants’ experiences and sense-
44 26 making, as well as to clarify the research team’s understandings of the participants’ thoughts,
45 27 feelings, and actions towards the EPPP (ibid). Given the first and second author held similar
46 28 roles in different football academies and had shared experiences of the EPPP, we felt able to
47 29 develop a rapport with the participants that supported the generation of rich and authentic
48 30 accounts of policy enactment. All interviews were held at locations where the participants felt
49 31 comfortable and at a time that was convenient to them (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).
50 32 Specifically, in academy premises prior to or following training sessions or fixtures. In sum,
51 33 all twelve coaches participated in at least 2 interviews, with 6 coaches participating in a third
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3 1 during a two-year period, with over 2000 hours of interview data being generated and
4 2 transcribed verbatim in preparation for analysis.
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8 4 *Data Analysis* 9 10 5

11 6 Traditionally, data collection, analysis and the writing up of studies have been written as
12 7 sequential and distinct features of social science inquiry (Tracy, 2018). In this study, we utilised
13 8 a phronetic-iterative approach that concurrently alternated between data generation, emergent
14 9 readings of the data, consulting relevant explanatory frameworks, and writing (ibid). We began
15 10 the formal process of interpretation with a descriptive ‘primary cycle coding’ or ‘open coding’
16 11 (ibid). The impetus for the study and the initial broad research questions were guided by the
17 12 first and second author’s knowledge and personal experiences of working in football academies
18 13 that were implementing the EPPP. However, the empirical data were used to drive the coding
19 14 process (ibid). Through agreements and disagreements in deliberation between authors, initial
20 15 descriptive and basic codes were developed. These included, for example, ‘increased
21 16 workload’ and ‘greater scrutiny of coaches’ work’. During each stage of the data collection
22 17 process, the research team met regularly as critical friends to offer different perspectives,
23 18 reflexively acknowledge multiple ‘truths’ (Smith & McGannon, 2018, p. 117), determine
24 19 which data were important, and consider how the primary codes might be developed in the
25 20 process of ‘secondary cycling’ (Tracy, 2018, p. 66). During the secondary coding cycle,
26 21 tentative links to a variety of possible theoretical interpretations were considered. This allowed
27 22 for the emic as well as the etic readings of the data (Sparkes & Smith, 2014, p. 102). Our
28 23 collective understanding of theory and literature proved useful for interpreting and building
29 24 theoretical explanations, as well as informing new lines of questioning during the interviews
30 25 with participants (Tracy, 2018). Indeed, this iterative approach to data generation and
31 26 interpretation informed the refinement and development of the second and third interviews,
32 27 which allowed us to acquire in-depth insights into how the participants understood the EPPP,
33 28 how the EPPP had impacted upon their everyday coaching work, as well as how they chose to
34 29 respond to the demands and opportunities presented by the EPPP.
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31 31 Consistent with the recommendations of Tracy (2018), a range of theories and concepts were
32 32 considered at each stage of data generation and analysis. Over time, we increasingly came to
33 33 see the value of Ball and colleagues’ (e.g., Ball, 2000; Ball 2003; Ball et al., 2011a; 2011b;
34 34 Ball et al., 2012; Braun et al., 2011; Perryman et al, 2018) work as a productive explanatory

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3 1 framework. While we have drawn on the theorisation of Ball for the purpose of this study, we
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5 2 do not claim this to be a definitive reading of our data. Rather, we believe the application of
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7 3 his theorising allowed us to make sense of the participants experiences, decisions and actions
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9 4 in a way that furthers our understanding of elite sport policy enactment.
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12 6 **Heuristic Framework**

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15 8 As outlined above, we drew on Ball and colleagues (e.g., Ball, 2000; Ball 2003; Ball et al.,
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17 9 2011a; 2011b; Ball et al., 2012; Braun at al., 2011; Perryman et al, 2018) theorising of policy
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19 10 enactment as our primary heuristic device. Collectively, this work has demonstrated the ways
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21 11 in which policy may be responded to, resisted and enacted in a variety of creative, sophisticated
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23 12 and complex ways by diverse policy actors, who are both enabled and constrained by their
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25 13 institutional contexts (Ball, Maguire Braun & Hoskins, 2011a). Akin to the focus of our study,
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27 14 much of this inquiry has been broadly located in the context of increasingly dominant
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29 15 neoliberal managerialist reforms that underpin policy development and implementation aimed
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31 16 at enhancing the learning, knowledge and skills of children and young adults (Ball, 2012).
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34 18 For Ball et al. (2012), enactment begins with a politically and contextually situated
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36 19 interpretation and translation of policy. Here, actors individually and collectively interpret
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38 20 policy by attempting to make sense of the policy and consider what it might mean for them.
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40 21 This includes the level of importance attached to the policy, what consequences might ensue
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42 22 by complying, or not, with the policy, and how they might seek to respond to policy goals and
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44 23 objectives. Translation, meanwhile, refers to ‘making policy into materials, practices, concepts,
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46 24 procedures and orientations’ (Ball, Maguire, Braun & Hoskins, 2011b, p. 620). Here, policies
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48 25 are re-configured to suit expectations of different policy audiences or institutional needs (Ball,
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50 26 Hoskins, Maguire & Braun, 2011, p. 8). As such, the process of enactment involves policy
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52 27 texts and imperatives being translated into action, or plans for action, which are taken up in
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54 28 whole or part by different actors, in different situations and at different ‘moments’ (ibid).
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56 29 Furthermore, Ball et al. (2011b) suggested that policy translation ‘is a process of invention and
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58 30 compliance’ (p.630) as actors ‘engage with policy and bring their creativity to bear on its
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60 31 enactment, [and]... are also captured by it. They change it, in some ways, and it changes them’
32 (ibid.).
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3 1 Imperative policies such as the EPPP aim to continually improve standards in attainment and
4 2 performance (Ball et al, 2011b, p. 612), and have been associated with an intensification of
5 3 actors' roles and changes to the conditions and meanings of work. Drawing on Lyotard's law
6 4 of contradiction, Ball (2000, 2003) described intensification as an increase in the volume of
7 5 both existing and new activities which incur costs in terms of time and energy (Ball, 2000),
8 6 especially in terms of adhering to performance monitoring and management processes. Here,
9 7 the intensification of work is interwoven with the imposition of systems of accountability (Ball,
10 8 2013) which operate through various forms of surveillance and self-regulation (Perryman,
11 9 Maguire, Braun & Ball 2018). Practitioners are required to position themselves and respond to
12 10 surveillance that is exercised through regimes of audit, inspection and evaluation (ibid). Here,
13 11 individual and organisational practice is then steered towards attaining constant improvement
14 12 through what Ball (2003) described as 'performativity'; a 'policy technology' (p. 215) of
15 13 reform and a regime of accountability. In doing so, Ball (2003) suggested actors'
16 14 'performances' are shaped and informed by rewards and sanctions, which collectively act as
17 15 means of 'incentive, control, attrition and change' (p. 216.). Typically, the effects of
18 16 performativity include the challenging or displacement of actors' values. For example, Ball
19 17 (2003) observed the splitting of individuals' judgements about good practice and the
20 18 performative needs prioritised within an organisation. Here, Ball (2003) argued that impression
21 19 management is often prioritised at the expense of commitment, judgement and authenticity.

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24 21 Ball (2003) suggested that accountability and surveillance regimes can shape a particular form
25 22 of performativity, labelled as 'fabrications' (p. 222). A fabrication is produced through 'a
26 23 spectacle, game-playing, or cynical compliance' and is only generated for the judgements of
27 24 others (Ball, 2000, p. 17). Indeed, fabrications are deliberately produced to be effective
28 25 within a performative regime. They privilege particular representations of the organization
29 26 and/or person and are 'informed' (or driven) by the 'priorities, constraints and climate of the
30 27 policy environment' (ibid). In producing fabrications, organisations and individuals convey
31 28 representations that are not true accounts of themselves, but neither are they 'outside the truth'
32 29 (Ball, 2003, p. 224). Indeed, Ball (2003, p. 225) suggested fabrications are axiomatically
33 30 paradoxical; they are both a resistance and capitulation to performativity. That is, the
34 31 production of fabrications, and the act of producing them become the modus operandi of the
35 32 individual and organisation, which is reflected in reporting and recording systems in different
36 33 ways. These include 'creative accountancy' (ibid) through to deliberate misrepresentations or

1 cheating. As such, policies designed to make organisations more transparent potentially render
2 them opaquer.

4 **Findings and Analysis**

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6 Our etic and emic readings of the data set led us to generate two over-arching analytic themes.
7 These are (a) The situated translation of EPPP requirements and an intensification of coaches'
8 work, and (b) Performing fabrications under increasing accountability and surveillance. These
9 are discussed below.

11 ***Translating the EPPP and the changing expectations of the professional football academy*** 12 ***coach***

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14 The participants' initial understandings of the EPPP and what it might mean for their everyday
15 working practices developed in advance of the policy's formal introduction and, in line with
16 Ball et al.'s (2011a, 2011b) theorising, they were politically and contextually situated. In this
17 case, the EPPP was perceived as a challenge or threat to their employment as coaches. Indeed,
18 the participants highlighted how the part-time nature of their employment and their positioning
19 in lower status academies, would exacerbate existing power imbalances in the academy system.
20 As coach H explained:

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22 "We were on tenterhooks really... we didn't know exactly what was going to
23 happen or what we needed to do but it sounded like category one academies,
24 mainly your Premier League clubs, could just come in and take players from a
25 category three academy like ours for £3,000 for every year they have been there,
26 and there is nothing we can do about it... that's peanuts to them and a lot less
27 money than we could usually get for a player transferring to another academy
28 and that could kill an academy like ours off as it might not be economically
29 sustainable to run it in that way".

30
31 All the participants explained how they were subsequently 'recruited' as 'active participants'
32 to enact the EPPP through conversations with their respective academy management personnel
33 in both formal and informal meetings (Maguire, Braun & Ball., 2015). In these encounters, it
34 was instantiated that the EPPP was a policy that needed to be implemented and entailed

1 “changes to the ways in which we do things” (Coach J). The consequences of not responding
2 were understood as being highly problematic to the participants; “the club would lose funding
3 from The Football League and our jobs would no longer exist” (Coach J).
4

5 Consistent with Ball et al.’s (2011a) notion of imperative policies, official academy
6 documentation was developed, ‘texts’ were made and ‘artefacts’ devised to be ‘translated’ into
7 action. These specifically included: a) the introduction of a standardised player curriculum
8 based on each club’s development philosophy, and b) the implementation of an electronic
9 recording system to record and track player progress. In terms of the former, detailed age
10 specific player development and attainment outcomes were devised and were expected to be
11 achieved through participation through structured training and match schedules. To monitor
12 players’ progress towards these performance outcomes, the participants were also required to
13 undertake new administrative duties. Chief among these was inputting numerical player ratings
14 and written qualitative summaries of player learning and progress against official benchmarks
15 into the online system on a session by session and game by game basis against physical,
16 technical, tactical, psychological and social markers (The Premier League, 2011).
17

18 Here, the emphasis on such demands depict coaching as an increasingly technocratic activity
19 evident in elite sports institutions (Williams & Manley, 2016). In keeping with Ball et al.’s
20 (2011b, p. 612) notion of ‘technical professionals’, most of the participants felt the new
21 administrative duties were imposed upon them and detracted from the main task of coaching.
22 As such, they could be considered as ‘passive policy subjects’ (ibid), or ‘receivers of policy’
23 (Braun, 2017), who were expected to react positively to the changing demands of their
24 employers (and EPPP policy). The participants, who had worked in academy football for
25 longer periods of time, regarded these changes as particularly unwelcome: ‘I’m not computer
26 literate and I’m not gonna try now...I’ve always been successful why should I change what I
27 do?’ (Coach G). Despite these criticisms, ‘murmurrings’ and ‘subtle discontents’ (Ball et al,
28 2011a), the participants appeared to offer little resistance to the new duties and accompanying
29 policy messages. Similar to the work of Ball (2000) then, the participants were largely
30 ‘compliant’ (if sometimes unwilling) policy actors. Indeed, those coaches employed in their
31 respective academies for longer periods tended to articulate views consistent with ‘resistance
32 within accommodation’ (Braun 2017, p. 172). As Coach I explained:
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3 1 “I don't mind some sort of structure, but I feel some boys need to work on certain
4 2 things, for example, their passing technique, but I have to evidence that I keep
5 3 to the structure on the PMA system online and you might have to be working
6 4 on dribbling or defending and you struggle to get passing in which affects their
7 5 ability in games”.

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10 6
11 7 The participants believed that the added duties and emphasis on administrative tasks served to
12 8 redefine the role of a professional football academy coach. Specifically, most participants felt
13 9 their autonomy was reduced and there was less trust in their professionalism. Common phrases
14 10 such as, ‘I don't feel like a coach anymore’ and ‘I feel like I am an administrator!’ were
15 11 frequently expressed. Working within the confines of the curriculum meant coaching work was
16 12 becoming more prescribed, and “becoming more mechanical and you don't want to feel like
17 13 you're a robot” (Coach J). A particularly illustrative example was offered by Coach B, who
18 14 said:

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21 15
22 16 “I felt a real sort of removal of power almost from me as a coach...sessions were
23 17 planned for me to make sure that they were in line with this overall sort of club
24 18 philosophy... So, there was much less freedom, officially as a coach, I felt like
25 19 it removed the skill set of actually planning and devising sessions.”

26
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28 20
29 21 The participants evidently perceived the enactment of their coaching role to be constrained,
30 22 narrowly defined, and lacking creativity (Ball et al., 2011b, p. 612). Despite this, some coaches
31 23 responded positively to a more systematic approach to player development demanded by the
32 24 new administrative duties. Indeed, some coaches appeared to be ‘entrepreneurial’ and
33 25 ‘enthusiastic’ policy actors, who straightforwardly accommodated and pushed forward these
34 26 new activities with some conviction (Ball et al 2011b; Braun 2017). Here, many of the younger
35 27 participants noted they could ‘put my own twist’ on the topic to be delivered. This finding is
36 28 consistent with Ball et al's (2011b) observation that invention in practice is possible within the
37 29 formal structures that imperative policies bring. For example, Coach C explained that the
38 30 standardised curriculum provided ‘content and structure that we didn't have in the past’ so that
39 31 ‘I will know what topic matter to coach each week, but how I coach it is up to me... and I will
40 32 be able to track the players' development and have a record of it to inform my practice’ (Coach
41 33 E). He further expanded on this point with some optimism:

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3 1 “When I first started seven years ago, we didn’t have a programme. It was just
4 a case of do what you want... now they have a structured program to follow
5 2
6 3 which will benefit the players. I like how it links with the core philosophy as
7
8 4 well. It goes right from the first team to the under 9s... so we are all working
9
10 5 on the same topics at the same time and have the player targets and objectives
11
12 6 that all link. So that's beneficial and in the next five years I think it could see
13
14 7 some people graduating from the academies more consistently”.

15 8
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17 9 Regardless of their orientation towards the EPPP, it was apparent that all the participants
18
19 10 experienced an intensification of their coaching work. That is, an increase in the volume of
20
21 11 activities associated with the role of a professional football academy coach. Their respective
22
23 12 experiences of increased workload could be understood in relation to Ball’s (2003)
24
25 13 conceptualisation of first order and second order activities. In the context of coaching, the
26
27 14 former can be understood to include the duties traditionally associated with direct player
28
29 15 engagement/contact time, designing and delivering coaching sessions and games, and engaging
30
31 16 in more regular continuous professional development activity (The Premier League 2011). In
32
33 17 contrast, the latter included the new administrative duties. Consistent with Ball’s (2003, p. 221)
34
35 18 analysis, the coaches found that the time and effort they devoted to ‘second order’ activities
36
37 19 had a constraining impact on their first order activities. Indeed, the participants reported an
38
39 20 additional 10-20 extra hours of work per week being required to complete these tasks. In their
40
41 21 own words:

42 22
43 23 “Paperwork, paperwork being a massive one... it’s good to have the evidence
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45 24 but I think they’ve maybe took it a little bit to the extreme, where I feel like at
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47 25 times I’m spending more time on the computer, logging everything and
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49 26 evaluating their progress against targets, than I’m actually spending on the pitch
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51 27 with the actual players ... there’s a lot more admin and not enough coaching.”
52
53 28 (Coach C)

54 29
55 30 “...for me it’s taking away from the coaching...you spend so much time doing
56
57 31 paperwork and reviewing you turn up to sessions stressed and not prepared
58
59 32 because you haven’t got that time to plan, because you’re doing all the reviews.
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33 Obviously, the players are getting affected then, they’re not getting the quality
34 of session that they should be getting.” (Coach J).

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5 2 Evidently, the participants found the intensification of work to be a particularly contradictory
6 3 experience; the second order activities were not only introduced but were prioritised over first
7 4 order activities. Performing these tasks also incurred costs. That is, they consumed ‘so much
8 5 energy that it drastically reduce[d] the energy available for making improvement inputs’ (Ball
9 6 2003, p. 21) through traditional ‘on the grass’ coaching work.
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15 8 In keeping with Ball’s (2003) analysis of the contradictions of intensification, the coaches also
16 9 explained how they associated social and emotional costs with their new regime of work. This
17 10 was particularly acute as they attempted to balance their part-time status as coaches, with other
18 11 work and careers, their families, and their wider, social lives. Here, the fulfilling of second
19 12 order activities was variously accompanied by “individual feelings of pride, guilt, shame and
20 13 envy” (Ball, 2003, p. 221). In their own words:
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26 14

27 15 “Where really you should be concentrating on your own job because that’s your
28 16 main income, that’s your cash cow, that one... but you have got these reviews
29 17 to do and it is in the back of your mind and you try to fit them in at lunch time
30 18 or get home early or stay up late at night to do them.... Sometimes you try to fit
31 19 them in during the day job and you feel bad about that!... You know you are not
32 20 giving them your full attention and not doing them properly which isn’t fair on
33 21 the players. “ (Coach C).
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41 23 “Those three days I like (training and match days) but it’s the day before, the
42 24 day after are written off and as you know the wife isn’t happy. If it’s not that
43 25 your kids aren’t happy... on a Sunday afternoon we might have a game away...
44 26 like Bradford this week, it’s going to be half 3, 4 o’clock by the time I get home,
45 27 and if I get home and I’m behind on my reviews then and then I say to my wife
46 28 ‘Right, I’ve got to log the game now on Session Planner, I’ve got to mark all of
47 29 the kids, I’ve got to go through, get all the objectives and put them all on’, it’s
48 30 quite hard, it’s difficult trying to find the time to do it and I end up letting
49 31 someone down, usually the wife!. ” (Coach D)
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58 33 Such frustrations were further accentuated by the fact that the participants did not receive any
59 34 additional remuneration for the extra time they were required to invest in order to complete
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3 1 second order activities. Indeed, Coach L vexed ‘it is a hell of a lot more than we used to do for
4 2 no more money, reward or help...you don’t get any extra time for the all this extra work’. As
5 3 a consequence of the intensification of their coaching work, the participants described a strong
6 4 sense of being tired, struggling to ‘cope’ and ‘keep-up’, and, sometimes, feeling completely
7 5 overwhelmed (Ball et al, 2011b). Despite this, the participants felt compelled to complete all
8 6 first order and additional second order activities in attempts to secure their ongoing
9 7 employment as professional football academy coaches. This state of affairs resembles the
10 8 ‘performative technologies’ of neoliberal management in professions such as education
11 9 (Perryman et al. 2018; Manoley et al. 2019). It also reflects the micro-political nature of football
12 10 coaching work (e.g., Potrac, Jones, Gilbourne, & Nelson, 2012) where the consequences of not
13 11 performing a personally cherished role ‘correctly’ are seen to lead to the termination of a
14 12 coach’s employment. Indeed, the participants not only enjoyed their status as academy coaches,
15 13 but they also recognised that the pool of coaching talent far outstripped the number of coaching
16 14 positions available in the academy system; “If I don’t then I will just be replaced by someone
17 15 that will, that’s football, there’s always someone waiting to take your place” (Coach H).
18 16

17 ***Making it up, fabricating, and being watched in professional academy football coaching***

18

19 Whilst research has demonstrated that sports coaches have an influence on, and responsibility
20 20 for, athletes’ development and successes (Purdy & Potrac, 2016), the intensification of the
21 21 participants’ coaching work here greatly heightened the extent to which they each felt
22 22 accountable for the attainment of the players in their charge. Indeed, our findings illustrate how
23 23 this was manifest in a wider perception of increased managerial scrutiny of both first order and
24 24 second order activities, exacerbating latent perceptions of being judged by significant others
25 25 articulated by coaches in high performance organisational contexts (e.g. Potrac et al., 2012).
26 26 Interestingly, the participants highlighted how this concern was not so much focused on the
27 27 extent to which players achieved development targets and transitioned through the academy,
28 28 but their ability to evaluate and record data in alignment with club player performance
29 29 indicators (c.f. Ball, 2013). It was particularly these second order activities (ostensibly the
30 30 recording of sessions, games and player data on the online computer system) which were
31 31 perceived to be associated with ‘accountability systems’. This was largely attributed to the
32 32 shared belief that significant others (e.g., academy managers and auditors) could access and
33 33 monitor the enactment of tasks and, as such, the participants felt ‘continually accountable’ and
34 34 their activities ‘constantly recorded’ (Ball, 2000, p. 2). Indeed, the participants were aware they

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3 1 could be judged both internally (e.g. academy managers, heads of coaching, fellow coaches)
4 and externally (e.g. auditors) in this regard. The outcomes of such organisational practices were
5 2
6 a strong sense of being ‘watched’ and ‘evaluated’ on the participants behalf, which generated
7 3
8 feelings of self-doubt, anxiety and stress (Potrac et al, 2017). For example, referring to first
9 4
10 order tasks, Coach F elaborated on typical feelings expressed by all the participants when they
11 5
12 were observed by academy management figures in training sessions and matches:
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14 7

15 8 “when they (management) come down and if they’re standing watching, and
16 9 talking, you think ‘Are they talking about me? Does my session look okay? Is
17 10 my topic definitely the topic I should be coaching?’ Then all of a sudden, your
18 11 train of thought might go, your attention goes, worrying and stressing about
19 12 what you are doing and if it looks good, then I’m getting stressed with the kids,
20 13 thinking ‘Why aren’t they doing this? Why aren’t they doing this!’”
21 14

22 15 Reflecting the views of all of the participants, Coach A further remarked on feeling watched
23 16 without being in the physical presence of others in relation to second order tasks:
24 17

25 18 “I mean, I will give you an example I feel like now even though nobody is
26 19 directly watching me I feel like I am under scrutiny a lot of the time, whether
27 20 they are there or not...I feel that my sessions, my recording of sessions and
28 21 players’ development is being scrutinised and that I am being judged.”
29 22

30 23 Our participants’ experience of the EPPP accountability systems was consistent with the work
31 24 of Perryman et al. (2018). For example, perceiving themselves to be under constant
32 25 surveillance, the participants became increasingly aware of the need to police, discipline and
33 26 self-regulate themselves in ways that they deemed the policy and their managers required of
34 27 them (Chesterfield, Potrac & Jones, 2010). Here, Ball’s (2003) reading of performativity as a
35 28 policy technology and regime of accountability is useful in understanding how and why
36 29 individual and organisational practices were developed to satisfy the demands of work. In
37 30 preparation for an audit inspection, coaches felt compelled to engage with and complete second
38 31 order tasks not only for oneself, but also as a collective responsibility to other colleagues and
39 32 the overall status and reputation of the academy. Typical of many, Coach I explained;
40 33

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3 1 “...because clubs like us gets £250k a year for being a Category 3 academy, and
4 if they don’t get that then they will shut down the academy and that’s people’s
5 2 full-time jobs as well as our part-time ones, so when the audit was going on last
6 3 year, a lot of people were getting stressed and was in meetings every night until
7 4 10 o’clock, you don’t want to be the one that costs the club its status... and that
8 5 affects you, you know, I wouldn’t want to be the one responsible for us to get a
9 6 Category 4. I wouldn’t be able to live with that.”
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9 For our participants, the consequences of intensification and accountability generated “a kind
10 of values schizophrenia”, in which “commitment, judgement and authenticity” became
11 subordinated to “impression and performance management” (Ball, 2003, p. 221). That is, in
12 responding to the technologies of performativity and engaging in a performative culture, the
13 participants’ understandings of ‘good coaching’ and ‘player needs’ were challenged and
14 disrupted by the commitment to, and perceived priority of, administrative second order
15 activities. The need for coaches to show they are effective, efficient and have value (Ball,
16 2003, p. 216) encouraged a willingness to engage in what can be described as ‘performative
17 acts’ (Ball, 2000). Specifically, the coaches employed strategies and tactics to accommodate,
18 respond to, and resist the increasingly performative nature of their work. Here, the participants
19 arguably took part in a type of performativity referred to as the ‘management of performance’
20 (Ball, 2003, p. 222). For example, some coaches engaged in calculated and strategic acts of
21 fabrication, as means of resistance and protection of the individual self in balancing the
22 intersection of their identity and their employment (Ball, 2003). That is, the participants
23 inputted the required data entries, logged session plans and reviews of players’ attainment
24 solely as a means by which to present the impression of conforming (Chesterfield et al, 2010)
25 to an increasingly performative agenda. Redolent of ‘cynical compliance’ (Ball, 2003, p. 222),
26 this was particularly the case for those coaches that were resistant to, and placed little value on,
27 the new administrative duties. In their own words:

28
29 “I don’t really care what the plan (curriculum) says we should be doing... it
30 might say defending but I want to do dribbling, dribbling for 10 minutes as part
31 of your warm up, you might do a pass and drill, a possession, shooting and a
32 game at the end, but your topic was defending... you just get a session from
33 someone else on session planner, copy and clone it and slide that in on session

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3 1 planner and just put the title as defending and nobody would know the
4 difference but on session planner it says you defending” (Coach J).

5 2
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7 4
8 “You feel like it’s what people want to see... I’ll be honest, I’ve slid a session
9 in and said that I’d done that and I haven’t because I don’t think anyone really
10 cares as long as there is something there that gives the impression we have
11 worked on a topic that is in the curriculum for that week but as long as the
12 paperwork is in order for when we get examined I don’t think anyone really
13 cares.” (Coach H).

14 10
15 11 Here, the participants’ testimonies suggested a propensity to engage in what Ball (2003)
16 12 conceptualised as ‘gamesmanship’ (p. 225) through the performance of ‘deliberate
17 13 misrepresentations’ (ibid) of themselves, their work and ultimately of their organisation. Most
18 14 coaches felt that coaching colleagues and management figures implicitly knew, and accepted,
19 15 the inputting of false data. Indeed, the participants reported feeling compelled to fabricate with
20 16 management figures complicity involved. For example, “they told me as long as something is
21 17 there, they aren’t bothered.... It just has to be done” (Coach A). This was also apparent for
22 18 participants that were more receptive, and willing, to accommodate the new additional tasks
23 19 into their coaching work who variously reported depositing coaching session plans and reviews
24 20 in messy and inconsistent ways, and rarely in optimal circumstances. For example, it was
25 21 common for coaching session plans and reviews to be deposited in a rush at or close to the
26 22 point of delivery. The participants shared how they also deposited plans and reviews
27 23 retrospectively on several occasions, with some admitting this was the case every time. In these
28 24 circumstances, the participants described experiencing feelings of guilt and shame at not
29 25 enacting their duties and expectations properly (Potrac et al, 2017). The participants were also
30 26 concerned that this may have implications for players and parents, as the data compiled by
31 27 coaches may not have been a true representation of the progress and developments towards
32 28 player targets. Coach A provided the following illustrative example:

33 29
34 30 “Yes, I have done that, see I will admit, I don’t like doing it and I feel bad about
35 31 it but I’ve got full time work commitments and family commitments and at
36 32 certain times of the year it becomes really pressurized... at the moment four
37 33 weeks have already gone by of training that I’ve got to catch up on, so I’ve got
38 34 to sort out eight sessions and put eight sessions online, try and remember how

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3 1 people were, try and remember who was there... so you end up guessing player
4 marks, I might give someone a 7 when they were worth a 9... in order to make
5 2
6 3 sure there is evidence there.”
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10 5 The participants also described how they engaged in collective fabrications to provide a
11 6 particular representation of their academies, which is consistent with Ball et al's (2013, p. 10)
12 7 reading of 'performative implementation'. That is, individual and collective fabrications
13 8 became incorporated into academy documentation for the purposes of accountability and audit,
14 9 rather than to affect the required pedagogical or organisational change (Ball 2000) of the EPPP
15 10 (The Premier League, 2011). This was particularly the case during the audit process. The
16 11 participants recalled having to prepare answers to possible questions and articulate processes
17 12 and practices that did not necessarily reflect the day to day working practices and environment
18 13 of the academy. Nonetheless, they were willing to engage in this to present an account of
19 14 themselves and their academy in line with what were perceived to be the demands of the
20 15 auditors. For example;
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31 17 I was on red alert really to be honest and I was making sure that my coaching
32 18 techniques were as refined as possible and understanding the difference between
33 19 the academy, coaching philosophy and the players philosophy and what a player
34 20 sensitive approach was...we would have to explain at the interview...we had to
35 21 say things were in place that weren't, as long as we ticked a box (Coach B).
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41 23 “So I think everyone has played the game a little bit, to get through the audit...It
42 24 was very much a case of putting on a show, we definitely put on a show...they
43 25 (auditors) didn't get the truth of what was going on at the club in my eyes. The
44 26 majority of things were just for the audit like session instructions, information,
45 27 the academy wording, they are kind of like, creating stuff I have never used, and
46 28 never will use” (Coach C)
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53 30 When asked for an example, the coach further elaborated:
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56 31
57 32 “Yes...If you get asked the process for new trialists, you have to say that they
58 33 get introduced by the scout, they get shown where the physio rooms are, they
59 34 have a tour... and all this. That doesn't happen. That never happens. The
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3 1 trialist comes in and they are interviewed, and you meet them ... it's not a bad
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5 2 process that happens ... But it's different to the one that we're putting on show
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7 3 for the triple P" (Coach C)
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9 4

10 5 Evidently, the coaches constructed several individual and collective fabrications to 'withstand
11
12 6 the inspectors gaze' (Courtney, 2016) prior to, during and after inspection. Research in
13
14 7 education has demonstrated that such staging and game-playing are performances which
15
16 8 become permanent artifices (Perryman et al, 2018). That is, they become engrained and
17
18 9 accepted as common practice. As such, our analysis indicates that the imposition of
19
20 10 managerialist techniques and performative technologies to affect change may have shaped the
21
22 11 work of coaches in ways not envisaged, or indeed desired, by those designing the EPPP.
23

24 13 **Conclusion**

25
26 14 In this study, we sought to illuminate some of the nuances and complexities of policy enactment
27
28 15 at the micro-level of practice; something that has been underexplored in the elite sport policy
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30 16 literature. In particular, we provided insights into how and in what ways twelve part-time
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32 17 professional football academy coaches understood, experienced and responded to the EPPP.
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34 18 Our analysis reflects wider sociological insights into the enactment and associated effects of
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36 19 neo-liberal policies and classification schemes, audit processes and inspection regimes
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38 20 particularly in education (Ball et al., 2012; Braun, 2017); where 'inspection readiness',
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40 21 fabrications and performativity have become deeply normalised to 'fit the system', distorting
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42 22 'successful' practice at the expense of 'box ticking' (Perryman et al., 2018). This was
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44 23 demonstrated by, a) an intensification of coaches' work (particularly second order activities),
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46 24 incurring costs to their professional roles and a loss of autonomy (Ball et al, 2011a, Ball et al.,
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48 25 2012), b) perceived greater accountability and increasing workplace surveillance (Perryman et
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50 26 al, 2018) of coaches' work, and c) the increasingly performative (Ball, 2003; Manoley et al.,
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52 27 2019) nature of coaches' work. Here, the coaches in this study actively sought, and indeed felt
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54 28 compelled, to fabricate accounts of their work, themselves and their academies to cope with
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56 29 the new policy environment in which they were expected to work (Perryman, 2009). Based on
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58 30 these findings, we would caution against policy makers and auditors increasing the regularity
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60 31 or reducing the notice of inspections and/or impositions of sanctions in attempts to ensure
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33 32 compliance with EPPP objectives in future developments of the policy. Similar responses in
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35 33 education appear to have embedded a state of 'inspection readiness' in schools with
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37 34 fabrications and performativity becoming deeply normalised in day to day teaching and

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3 1 learning. This can side-line the genuine needs of schools, teachers and learners at the expense
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5 2 of box ticking (Perryman et al., 2018).
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8 4 Clearly, our participants believed the introduction of the EPPP led them to experience working
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10 5 conditions and duties for which they had not necessarily been trained or prepared for, nor which
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12 6 they considered to be traditionally associated with the role of a professional academy football
13
14 7 coach. Here, the coaches also connected the policy to various ‘costs’ incurred to their
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16 8 wellbeing, such as negatively impacting work/life balance, main forms of employment, and,
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18 9 indeed, family life. This raises questions as to why sports coaches in our study sought to
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20 10 continue to labour under conditions and circumstances they perceived to be unfavourable and
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22 11 disconnected from task perceptions (i.e., beliefs about what they legitimately should or should
23
24 12 not be expected to do) attached to their coaching role (Watts & Cushion, 2017). By
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26 13 deconstructing the EPPP policy, it is our hope that these findings can help researchers, policy
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28 14 makers, educators, and organisations develop and reconstruct elite sport policies for sports
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30 15 workers by more effectively supporting them to enact their duties in ways that ensure desired
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32 16 outcomes for the end users and beneficiaries. We therefore suggest that elite sport organisations
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34 17 such as The FA and UEFA may wish to consider the inclusion of educational content on the
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36 18 complementary of first and second order activities in coaching practice at appropriate levels of
37
38 19 certification in coach education structures.
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41 21 Finally, we acknowledge the findings of this paper are specific to part-time academy football
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43 22 coaches working in Category 3 status academies. The extent to which such findings and
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45 23 implications resonate with full-time coaches in differently graded academies is a matter for
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47 24 further empirical investigation. In addition, the extent to which other important EPPP
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49 25 stakeholders such as academy managers may strategically interact with coaches and wider
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51 26 significant others to locally enact the EPPP is unclear. However, it does appear that the EPPP
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53 27 has further embedded an increasingly technocratic outlook to work in elite sports organisations
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55 28 (Williams & Manley, 2016), the implications of which, both positively or negatively, are still
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57 29 relatively unknown. Future empirical work may also wish to consider the extent to which, and
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59 30 for what explicit purpose, the products of sports workers’ enactment and labour are utilised.
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61 31 With specific reference to the context of this study, how and to what end the products of second
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63 32 order activities are used by more powerful agents and governing bodies in professional
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65 33 academy football (e.g. academy managers, heads of coaching, the English Football League and
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67 34 The EPL) and the implications this has for the full range of sports workers (including youth

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3 1 players) involved. In particular, to what extent the EPPP is positively impacting on practices,
4 2 resources, and the development of talented young footballers. Such work has much potential
5 3 to further illuminate how, why and in what ways policy is enacted by actors enmeshed in
6 4 networks of social relations. Lastly, consideration may be given to ‘how’ and ‘why’ sports
7 5 workers continue to perform increasingly intensified work, as well as the problematic
8 6 intersections of their lives inside and outside of the sporting workplace (Ives et al., in press).
9 7 Such work is important if we are to assess and better understand the impact of neoliberal policy
10 8 making on the health and wellbeing of sports workers (Roderick et al., 2017). We believe the
11 9 findings of this study have illustrated the messy and contradictory nature of coaches’ actions
12 10 in enacting a specific policy in the context of an elite sport environment. It is hoped that this
13 11 study can provide a stimulus for further investigation of sport policy enactment by coaches and
14 12 other sport policy stakeholders across different organisations and contexts. Such accounts have
15 13 much to offer in the quest to developing a rich, nuanced, and ‘reality’ grounded knowledge of
16 14 sports work.
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26 ⁱ As the game's Governing Body in England, education and training of coaches is a central
27 responsibility of The FA, as mandated by UEFA and FIFA. As members of the UEFA Convention, The
28 FA is required and authorised to deliver the coaching programme of UEFA kitemarked awards. More
29 information can be found here <http://www.thefa.com/learning/courses/all-courses>

30 ⁱⁱ Foot Pass is the English derivative of Double Pass, A Belgian based advisory and auditing body for
31 professional football academies.
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