

# Chapter 21

## Mexico

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### 21.1 Introduction: The Creation of Organized Sport in Mexico

Institutionalized sport in Mexico can be traced back to 1849 when the Ministry of War and the Marines coordinated gymnastics lessons as part of military training for soldiers (CONADE 2012b). There are records that show the subject *physical culture* being part of high-school curricula as early as 1856, making Mexico one of the first countries in the world to introduce the concept in the education system (Right to Play 2008). Immediately after the Mexican Revolution (in 1910), some politicians and educators saw sport as a tool to build up civil values and a sense of belonging within the citizens (Arbena 1991). As a consequence, just 10 years later, physical education (PE) became obligatory in all educational levels in the country (CONADE 2012b).

The first half of the twentieth century was of great importance for the development of organized sport in Mexico. The Mexican Olympic Committee (COM) was founded in 1923, and by 1926 Mexico hosted the first ever Central American and Caribbean Games. In 1929, just 2 years after its foundation, the Mexican Football Federation was incorporated to FIFA. In December 1932, the first serious attempt from the Mexican government to get involved in the national sports' life occurred with the creation of the Consejo Nacional de Cultura Física (National Council of Physical Culture). This was the first government office solely focused on legislating, coordinating, and promoting sport activities in Mexico.

Following the creation of the Council, in 1933 the Confederación Deportiva Mexicana (CODEME, Mexican Sport Confederation) was founded. Its main goal was to bring together every national governing body or association of sports in order

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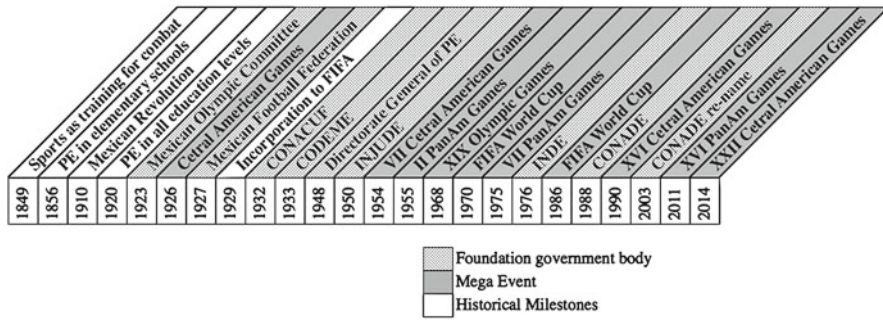


Fig. 21.1 Timeline of organized sport in Mexico

to promote organized sport. In 1948, the Mexican government, searching to regulate these efforts, created the Directorate General of Physical Education as a branch of the Secretary of Public Education (SEP) (CONADE 2012b).

It was not until 1988 that the main governing body of national sports was created. The Comisión Nacional de Deporte (CONADE, National Commission of Sport) evolved from being a sport-consulting group for SEP to be the government branch completely in charge of the promotion and organization of sports in Mexico. At the beginning of 2003, CONADE included physical activity to their agenda and the government renamed the organization Comisión Nacional de Cultura Física y Deporte (CONADE, National Commission of Physical Culture and Sport), as it is known today.

In summary, politicians saw sports as a tool to “make of Mexicans a better, healthier, and stronger people, cable of all those virile acts which solidify our nationality” (Arbena 1991). As interest grew, the government slowly built different commissions, departments, and institutes to guide the complex aspects of the national physical activity and sports. The way these different organisms interact is explained in the next section. The timeline (Fig. 21.1) provides a better overview of the development of institutionalized sport in Mexico via some key milestones.

## 21.2 Sport System and the Structure of Organized Sport

The Mexican sport system is very complex due to the number of institutes and organizations that have to operate together to make it work correctly. The Sistema Nacional de Cultura Física y Deporte (SINADE, National Sport System), the most important working group in Mexico’s sport, is the core and steering engine of the Mexican sport system.

SINADE is under the jurisdiction of the Federal Executive Power and is headed by CONADE. The members of SINADE are representatives of the state sport

institutes, national sport federations, the Mexican Olympic Committee, the private sector, three scholastic sport councils, and, until 2012, CODEME. A board of advisors runs the operation of SINADE, which is headed by the General Director of CONADE. The working group meets at least once a year to conjointly discuss the direction of sport and physical activity in the country.

Since 1948, SEP (whose main responsibility is the national education) has been responsible for sport education and physical culture. SEP formulates programs to promote sport for all, scholastic sport, and high-performance sport. Sport funding and research in sport science are also part of SEP’s responsibilities.

SEP relies mainly on CONADE to accomplish the goals of the different sport programs. CONADE is constituted as a public structure, decentralized from the Federal Government, and directly reporting to SEP. The Mexican President designates CONADE’s General Director every 6 years.

The main responsibility of CONADE is to develop and implement the National Sport and Physical Culture Program (PND for its initials in Spanish) as part of the National Development Plan established by the Federal Government. This multiannual program establishes clear guidelines for operational structure, budget distribution, goals, and objectives for every aspect of physical activity and sport in Mexico (CONADE 2012b). The contents of the PND include high-performance sport, sport for all, guidance for national and international events, and physical activity programs, among other things. CONADE also develops initiatives for building and maintaining sporting facilities. According to CONADE’s latest Organizational Manual (2012), these areas are managed by six sub-directorates as shown in Fig. 21.2 together with their main responsibilities.

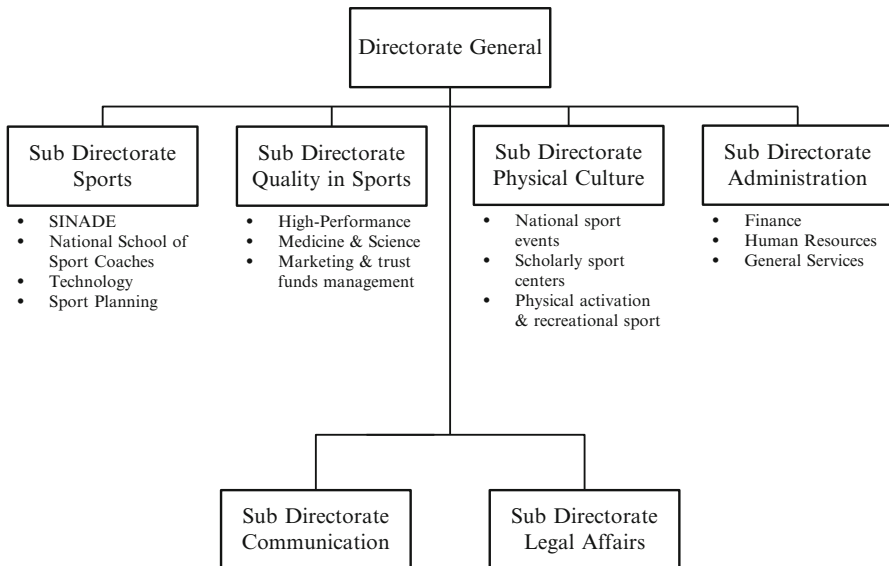


Fig. 21.2 CONADE organizational structure (CONADE 2012b)

CONADE delegates to the Instituto Estatal de Deporte y Cultura Física (INDE, State's Institute of Sport and Physical Culture)<sup>1</sup> the promotion, development, and organization of physical culture and sports in each state. The INDEs are requested by CONADE to develop their own local plan for sport and physical culture and encourages them to stay as close as possible to the PND. The INDEs consign the local sport associations to promote their respective sports within the state.

The local and national sport federations follow a business structure called Asociación Civil (A.C., Civil Associations), mainly used for nonprofit or charitable organizations. The federations are ruled by their own internal statutes and are responsible for coordinating and promoting activities of a particular sport in their region (*Ley General de Cultura Física y Deporte 2012*). The federations create their own strategies and usually follow a general sport strategy proposed by the governing body of the specific sport (even though they are not obliged). The National Federations are the only organizations entitled to set rules, programs, and regulations for sports in Mexico. They commonly follow guidelines set by the International Federations. As an example: Volleyball in Mexico City is organized by Mexico City's volleyball Association, but the local sport system is coordinated by the INDE from Mexico City. The local INDE develops a State Sport Plan that includes the volleyball association as part of it. The State Sport Plan ideally follows CONADE's PND and complies with the rules set by the International Volleyball Federation.

The Mexican Sports Confederation (CODEME) is constituted as an A.C. and is the representative of federated sport in Mexico. Its goal is to guarantee the correct organization and development of national sport by monitoring the proper implementation of the statutes that regulate the internal life of each of the more than 80 sport associations and sport federations (*CODEME 2010*). An important task of CODEME is to maintain and promote the collaboration between the federations, CONADE, Mexican Olympic Committee (COM), and the government. Also it is in charge of redistributing economic funds to the National Federations received from CONADE.

After the last amendment to the *Ley General de Cultura Física y Deporte* (LGCFD, General Law of Physical Culture and Sport) in 2013, CODEME lost the financial support of the government and has been excluded from SINADE. All this will be explained further in Sect. 21.4 of this chapter. At the time of writing, it is still unclear if CODEME will remain operative without the funding of the Federal Government, but it seems that after the new regulations, this association will disappear.

Another member of SINADE is the Mexican Olympic Committee (COM). Also a nongovernmental Civil Association with own rules and statutes based on the Olympic Charter, the COM is the national governing body recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). COM is responsible mainly for promoting and protecting the Olympic values within Mexico. It works closely with CONADE and CODEME to decide Olympic-related matters such as hosting sport events,

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<sup>1</sup> Some state agencies are called Consejos (councils) instead of Institutos (institutes).

confirmation of the Mexican Olympic delegation, or uniform design for Olympic competitions (Ley General de Cultura Física y Deporte 2012).

The Mexican Olympic Committee is also responsible for guaranteeing that Mexico is in good membership standing and is able to send athletes to competitions regulated by the different organizations recognized by the IOC. Some of the organizations are the Pan American Sports Organization (ODEPA), Centro American and Caribbean Sports Organization (ODECABE), and the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC).

The last members of SINADE are three scholastic sport councils. These Civil Associations were instituted to foster sports at all the different education levels in Mexico. The Consejo Nacional para el Desarrollo de la Educación Física y el Deporte en la Educación Básica (CONDEBA, National Council for the Physical Education and Sport Development in Basic Education) is responsible for the promotion and upbringing of sports in the very beginning of the education level, starting from primary schools. Sport in middle education and high school is organized by the Consejo Nacional para el Desarrollo del Deporte en la Educación Media Superior (CONADEMS, National Council for the Sport Development in Medium and High School Education). These two councils stimulate and foster the participation in physical activity and sports for all in schools from 1st grade through 12th grade.

Each of these councils (CONDEBA and CONADEMS) hosts one multisport national event every year in which youngsters can participate in chess, athletics, soccer, handball, basketball, volleyball, softball, and baseball.<sup>2</sup> These two councils work very closely with SEP and CONADE to formulate strategies and sport curricula for schools. The main goals are to increase participation level in sports and promote a healthier lifestyle through physical activity.

The third council coordinates sport in higher education institutes, and it is called the Consejo Nacional del Deporte en la Educación (CONDDE, National Council for Sport in Education). Sports in colleges, universities, and other institutes have a long tradition in Mexico. Athletic activities offered by the universities and colleges in Mexico started in 1947 (CONDDE 2013), and it has developed to the point that on January 2013 the NCAA<sup>3</sup> voted on the possibility of including some Mexican teams to the Division II American Football league (Diverse Staff 2013) in the United States.

At the beginning of 2013, CONDDE reported a membership enrollment of over 250 different private and public institutions from all over the country (CONDDE 2013). CONDDE's members are allowed to participate in the National University Games, or Universiade, a multisport event celebrated once a year since 1988 (CONDDE 2013). During 2 weeks the Universiade brings together the highest performance level of intercollegiate sports in the country. The long qualification process starts internally in the universities then evolving to state and regional

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<sup>2</sup>These eight sports are the core events but more could be added depending on agreements. In 2012, badminton and table tennis were exhibition events.

<sup>3</sup>NCAA stands for National Collegiate Athletic Association and is the authority of college sports in the United States.

qualification stage. Only first and second places of the regional elimination round qualify to the nationals. The Universiade is the platform to identify the national teams to represent Mexico at the World University Games. CONDDE is the organism mainly responsible for selecting the Mexican delegation with some assistance from CONADE and COM (Ley General de Cultura Física y Deporte 2012).

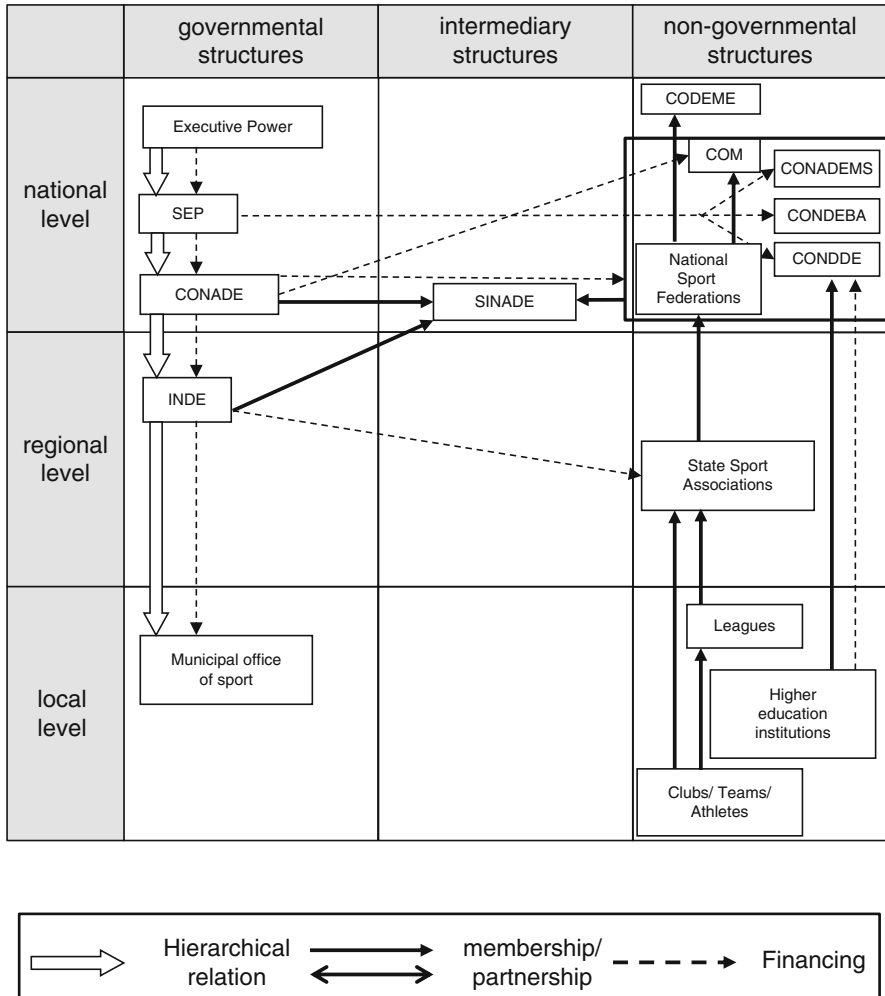
In short, CONADE sits at the top of the hierarchy level in Mexican sport. The national organizations supporting CONADE are COM, CODEME, National Sport Federations, and student councils. The INDEs, State Sport Associations, and Municipal Sport Offices coordinate and organize physical activity and sport in a more local level. The last pieces of the chain are the professional, amateur, and intercollegiate sport leagues and clubs. The SINADE is formed by representatives of all the aforementioned organizations and is the main working group in Mexican sport. Figure 21.3 shows the hierarchic levels and interactions between all the stakeholders. Double-lined arrows refer to an obligated hierarchical level, solid arrows indicate a voluntary or membership partnership, and the dotted arrows refer to funding, which is explained in the next section.

### 21.3 Financing Sport

In Mexico, the Federal Government is the main source of funding for sport. With the exceptions of CONDDE, which also receives strong funding from their members, all the national nongovernmental organizations receive resources mainly from CONADE or SEP. The legislation on financial incentives for private investment in sport is very narrow. It defines investments in sport as a donation mainly due to the business structure legislation behind Civil Associations. Therefore, the tax exemption or benefit cannot be over 7 % of the yearly income of the donor (Ley General de Cultura Física y Deporte 2012). As a result, sport sponsorship and private funding in Mexico concentrates mainly on high-performance athletes and the three big professional leagues: baseball, basketball, and soccer. These leagues, besides the 7 % of tax benefits, provide the donor with good brand exposure that small clubs and teams cannot offer.

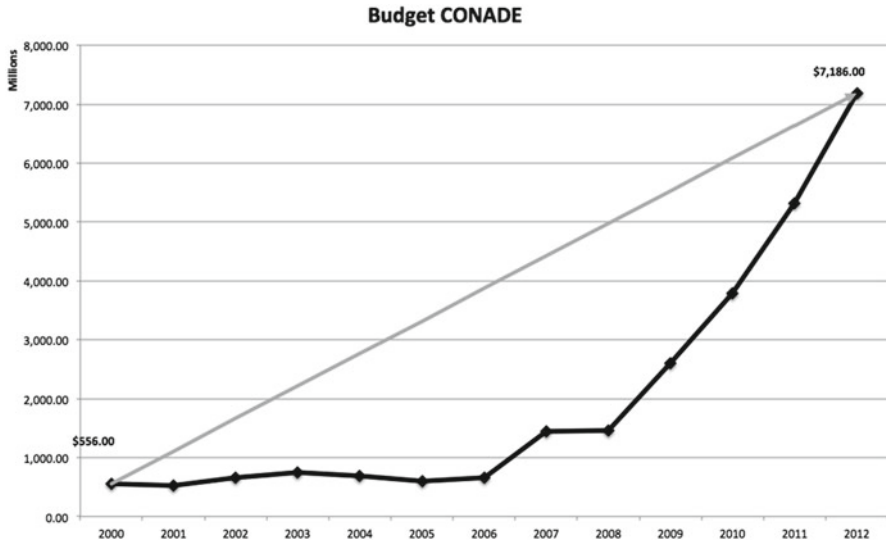
An important source of income for federations is selling national registration and licenses for athletes, leagues, or clubs. The federated sport in Mexico runs a Unique System of Sporting Register (Sistema Único de Registro Deportivo), commonly known as SiRED. CODEME is in charge of organizing the SiRED and receives a small share of each license sold by the federations. All the solid arrows on the nongovernmental structure column of Fig. 21.3 imply the payment of a membership fee. Together with the funding provided by INDEs, licensing an average of 700,000 athletes a year through SiRED has proved to be an important source of income for the sport associations (CODEME 2003).

Figure 21.3 presents the flow of funds for sport and physical activity. The funding starts at the executive government branch that assigns part of the yearly national budget to CONADE through SEP. These two governmental organizations redistribute the money according to their goals and guidelines. Civil Associations are



**Fig. 21.3** Mexico's national sport structure. Note: *COM* Mexican Olympic Committee, *CONADE* Comisión Nacional de Deporte (National Commission of Sport), *CONADEMS* Consejo Nacional para el Desarrollo del Deporte en la Educación Media Superior (National Council for the Sport Development in Medium and High School Education), *CONDDE* Consejo Nacional del Deporte en la Educación (National Council for Sport in Education), *CONDEBA* Consejo Nacional para el Desarrollo de la Educación Física y el Deporte en la Educación Básica (National Council for the Physical Education and Sport Development in Basic Education), *INDE* Instituto Estatal de Deporte y Cultura Física (State's Institute of Sport and Physical Education), *SEP* Secretaría of Public Education, *SINADE* Sistema Nacional de Cultura Física y Deporte (National Sport System), *CODEME* Mexican Sports Confederation

allowed to have other sources of income, commonly through membership fees. The state sport associations have to pay an affiliation fee to their federation, and the federation pays affiliation fees to COM and CODEME. The same applies between the higher education institutions and CONDDE.



**Fig. 21.4** CONADE's budget from 2000 to 2012 (SEP 2012; Centro de Estudio de las Finanzas Públicas 2011)

The accumulated public expenditure assigned to sport in Mexico for the period 2007–2011 was MXN 10,438.6<sup>4</sup> million (EUR 579.92 million). This represents roughly 0.1 % of the national GDP, a smaller number than countries like Germany (0.2 %) or France (0.7 %) (Humphreys et al. 2010). On the other hand, the spent budget increased drastically from 2000 to 2012 as Fig. 21.4 shows.

With a new management team entering CONADE and Guadalajara as the host for the Pan American Games, 2006–2007 marked an important milestone for the funding of sport in Mexico. From that year on, the government invested heavily in CONADE. The budget increased from an average of MXN 630 million (EUR 35 million) between 2000 and 2006 to MXN 1,439 million (EUR 80 million) in 2007 (Table 21.1). Moreover, between 2007 and 2012 the spent budget kept increasing an average yearly rate of 53.30 %. All in all, the increment is substantial. From MXN 556 million in 2000 to over 13 times that same amount in 2012 with a budget reported at MXN 7,186 million (Fig. 21.4).

Every year CONADE receives from the Federal Government the national funds aimed to sport (Centro de Estudio de las Finanzas Públicas 2011) and is in charge of redistributing it. According to an official report reproduced in Table 21.2, between 2003 and 2012, the INDEs and the National Federations were allocated with the largest shares of the national sport budget (CONADE 2012a).

The budget line called *sport provisions* refers expenses for scholarships for promising young athletes, lifelong pension to Olympic medalists, different types of

<sup>4</sup>The amount is expressed in real terms by adjusting for inflation.



**Table 21.1** CONADE's spent budget from 2000 to 2012

Year	Millions MXN
2000	556.00
2001	520.80
2002	651.70
2003	740.50
2004	693.70
2005	592.30
2006	655.70
2007	1,439.30
2008	1,464.80
2009	2,600.60
2010	3,783.40
2011	5,311.80
2012	7,186.00

**Table 21.2** Biggest expenditure categories in the Mexican sport system from 2003 to 2012 (in millions MXN)

Allocation to:	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012 <sup>a</sup>
COM	41	46	–	– <sup>b</sup>	32	62	56	33	53	37
CODEME	59	81	82	76	90	21	34	140	81	73
CONDDE	22	26	33	25	32	31	35	46	73	33
INDEs	201	219	182	183	669	770	1,351	1,892	2,963	939
National Federations	103	72	75	56	89	126	106	134	173	123
Sport Provisions	46	67	80	81	157	191	159	175	386	79

<sup>a</sup>Accumulated yearly expenditure until June 2012

<sup>b</sup>COM did not comply with CONADE's requirements during 2005 and 2006 and therefore did not receive funding

awards and incentives to outstanding sportspeople, insurances for high-performance athletes, and salaries for foreign coaches. Lately it has become the second largest investment area after INDEs.

The government's National Development Plan 2007–2012 established as one of its priorities the “development of sport facilities and the use of open spaces for the construction of sport courts” (CONADE 2012a). Therefore, CONADE works closely with states and municipalities to create new infrastructure. The process starts when the local governments approach CONADE with a concrete project for an athletic facility or recreational sport area. Then CONADE, based on a viability analysis, decides if the investment shall be pursued or not. The whole process from the assignment of resources to the construction and inauguration is monitored by CONADE.

Hosting the 2011 Pan American Games and the 2014 Central American and Caribbean Games created a big boost in infrastructure investment during the last 5 years, as shown in Table 21.3. From the general budget allocated to sport infrastructure in 2009, 2010, and 2011, the investment for the Pan American Games represented 43.3 %, 35.8 %, and 23.2 %, respectively. But interestingly “no budget was clearly assigned to the maintenance of these new facilities” (Centro de Estudio de las Finanzas Públicas 2011).

**Table 21.3** Infrastructure investment 2007–2012 (Centro de Estudio de las Finanzas Públicas 2011; CONADE 2012a)

Year	Millions MXN
2007	165.50
2008	316.48
2009	1,479.52
2010	2,080.00
2011	3,228.00
2012	3,204.00

## 21.4 Sport Policy

National laws, internal regulations, and agreements between all the stakeholders create a legal framework for sports and physical activity in Mexico.

Sport and physical activity appear in the Mexican Constitution in the 4th article, granting every person the right to have access to physical culture and to practice sport free of discrimination. The constitutional text provides the senate and the lower chamber of the National Congress with the authority to legislate on sport and physical activity matters. Likewise, all 32 states in the country have local legislation on sport, or a set of specific provisions included in their local constitution on this matter (Méndez and Prado 2010).

The Organic Law of the Public Federal Administration establishes the bases of all public administration in Mexico and designs SEP as the government branch in charge of education, which includes teaching sports and physical culture. It is this legal document that entitles CONADE as the higher authority of national sport.

Without a doubt the most important sport legislation in Mexico is the Ley General de Cultura Física y Deporte (LGCFD, General Law of Physical Culture and Sport). This law defines the structure, organization, faculties, and responsibilities of SINADE and all its members. The LGCFD sets the general bases for the coordination and collaboration of the National Government, State Governments, Civil Associations, and the private sector. Legal definitions for sport and physical culture are also stated in this law.

Pushed by the Olympic gold medalist in 1986, former president of COM, and current senator Felipe Muñoz Kampas, the senate published the last significant amendment to this law on June 2013. The creation and recognition by law of the Mexican Paralympic Committee, the Commission of Arbitrage and Appeal for Sports, and the Electoral Surveillance Board in Sports are the most significant changes. The creation of the Electoral Surveillance Board in Sports replaces CODEME as the main supervisor of the correct application of statutes and regulations within the sport federations, leaving CODEME out of SINADE and cutting it out of government funding (Garduno 2013). The new law aims to create a more transparent sport system and more accountable institutions in the country (Ley General de Cultura Física y Deporte 2013).

The PND is the guiding instrument that allows CONADE to fulfill the commitments established by the Federal Government through the National Development

Plan in the field of physical culture and sport. The 2008–2012 PND considered four guiding principles: Physical Culture, Development of Sport, Mexican System of High Performance, and Transparency and Accountability (CONADE 2008).

CONADE emphasizes the need to create healthy habits in the population (CONADE 2012a). Therefore, the principle *Physical Culture* aims to increase physical activation and regular practice of sport for all the population. This is done through the promotion of physical activity in schools, at work, and in massive events. Moreover CONADE organizes and supports national multisport events for different levels, ages, and social groups providing with equal opportunities to all the population to participate and make use of existing (or new) resources and infrastructure (CONADE 2008).

The second guiding principle is *Development of Sport*. The National Superior School of Physical Education (ESEF) is an important tool for CONADE in this regard. The ESEF promotes the certification of capable professionals and technicians in the different areas of sport. This includes researchers in social sciences, humanities, medicine, and applied sport sciences. *Development of Sport* also seeks for the strengthening of SINADE and the efficient collection of up-to-date data on different areas of the Mexican sport system.

The construction, maintenance, and equipment of sport facilities also fall under this guideline. During 2006–2012 the Mexican Federal Government invested in 1,776 infrastructure activities all over the 32 states (SEP 2012). By the end of 2013, the High-Performance Center for Adapted Sport is planned to open its doors after a MXN 177 million (EUR 10 million) investment. This sport facility will be one of the most important in all Latin America and specifically build to fulfill all the requirements of adapted federations from wheelchair users to blind athletes (SEP 2012).

Mexico constantly strives to achieve better results in international competitions. Therefore, the *Mexican System of High Performance* is another pillar of the PND. In order to “develop and consolidate the Mexican sport in the higher sphere of high-performance” (CONADE 2008), efforts were concentrated in seven areas: high competition, Mexican sporting reserve, talent identification and scouting, Mexican School of Sport Development, sport modernization, sport research, and applied medicine/science. CONADE’s PND describes the creation of a blueprint strategy starting from the identification of new talent, followed with a solid work plan that includes economic, coaching, and scientific support, and finishing with a thorough evaluation of the achievements that could lead to awards and further economic support. Mexico has a National Center of High Performance (CNAR) that provided integral support for 1,329 athletes (high performance or talents) by August 2012 (SEP 2012). The services include coaches, nutrition, primary and secondary school, and (if required) accommodation. By the end of 2011, a total of 1,128 athletes, from which 336 were athletes with an impairment, received some kind of support from the different programs linked exclusively to high performance (SEP 2012). As explained in the financial section, great amount of the resources are allocated to developing high-performance athletes through sport provisions.

An important instrument for high performance is a trust fund called FODEPAR-CIMA that distributes economic support to top Mexican sportspeople. Those that

are ranked among the top eight in the world of their discipline or have potential to finish among the top 16 at the Olympics can have access to this fund. A report dated September 2012 from CONADE shows a total of 211 athletes benefitting from FODEPAR-CIMA just before the Olympic and Paralympic Games in London (CONADE 2012a).

The success and efficiency of this strategy is constantly debated in the media. Nevertheless, 48 % of the athletes enrolled in FODEPAR qualified to the 2012 Olympic Games winning seven medals. This result represents the best Olympic performance for Mexico since the 1968 Games in Mexico City (nine medals).

*Transparency and Accountability* is the last pillar of the PND. It aligns with the determined fight of the Federal Government against corruption in Mexico. It establishes accountability rules and formats that provide clear and sufficient information to CONADE to reformulate policies, improve the decision-making process, and, mainly, raise the social credibility in Mexican institutions (CONADE 2008). This principle focuses on correct governability of public institutions and funds. It plays a key role in the allocation of funding and is the only tool CONADE has to control, somehow, the correct usage of public money allocated to the National Federations.

## 21.5 Sport Participation

In the Mexican constitution, sport is legally defined as any institutionalized and regulated physical activity. According to CONADE, physical activity is any action that causes caloric consumption, meaning any body movement from daily activities to sporting training sessions (CONADE 2008). For purposes of physical culture and health, CONADE defines a desirable amount of physical activity to be an accumulation of 30 min of any exercise per day.

According to a national survey done by SEP in 2009, 94 % of the Mexicans know the importance of exercising, but only 39 % do it in their free time mainly arguing lack of time (SEP 2009).

Moreover, the 2012 National Survey about Health and Nutrition<sup>5</sup> (ENSANUT for the initials in Spanish) estimates that 58.6 % of the Mexicans aged 10–14 did not participate in any organized physical activity in the 12 months previous to the survey, 38.9 % took part in one or two activities, and 2.5 % in three or more. The same study reports that 11.9 % of teenagers between 15 and 18 in Mexico are inactive. Alarmingly, inactivity levels in Mexican adults increased in 47.3 % from 2006 to 2012 (Fig. 21.4). These inactivity indicators could be a result of spending over 4 h a day in front of a screen like 27.7 % of Mexican children, as reported by ENSANUT. The survey shows that adults in Mexico spent in average 1:40 h a day in passive transport, such as automobile or public transport (Fig. 21.5).

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<sup>5</sup>96,031 questionnaires were applied all over the country with an error margin of  $\pm 1.8$  % at 85 % confidence.

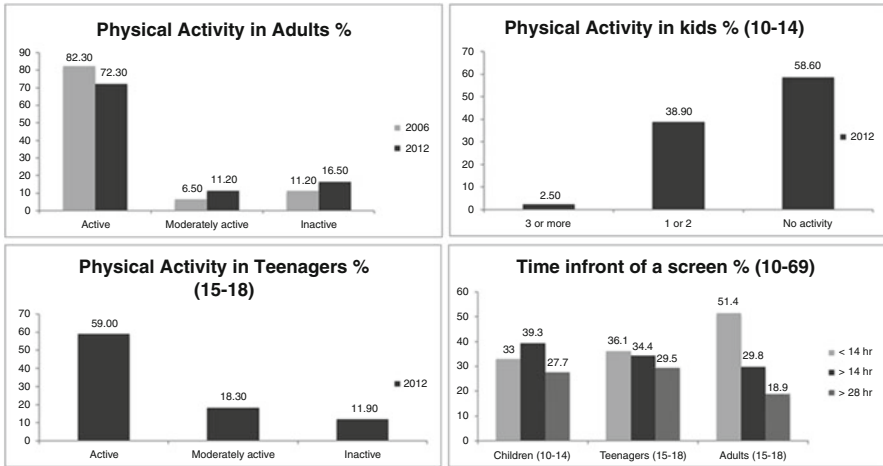


Fig. 21.5 Report on physical activity of Mexicans (ENSANUT 2012)

Table 21.4 Participation rate in different programs by CONADE 2008–2012 (SEP 2012; CONADE 2012a) in thousands

Year	Coaching certificates	Programs of physical activation	National multisport events			National games primary school
			National Olympiad	National Universiade	Mex games (not thousands)	
2008	8,594	11,087	3,838	796		4,187
2009	8,636	12,343	3,256	809		3,433
2010	8,273	16,190	3,307	808	448	3,146
2011	9,348	24,302	3,623	816	1,282	3,445
2012	8,240	32,369	3,651	913	3,005	3,545

This being said, it does not come as a surprise that Mexico’s population is second worldwide in obesity and fourth in child obesity. It is estimated that 70 % of Mexican adults are overweight (ENSANUT 2012). Facing these facts CONADE set as a primary goal to build a strong national physical culture through the PND. As explained in the policy section, the PND is operated through different instruments. Table 21.4 presents a summary of the participation rate (in thousands of persons) of the most relevant programs during the last 5 years.

The main slogan used to promote physical activity from 2008 to 2012 was “Activate, Vive Mejor” (Be active, live better). One strategy of the program on physical activation included activities for the promotion of sport in schools. CONADE reported to have increased the number of active students from 5.2 million during 2008 to 15.94 million by the end of 2012. Physical activity at workplaces showed similar results with a total of 2.4 million people taking part in activities at the end of 2012 (CONADE 2012a).

**Table 21.5** Main national multisport events in Mexico

Name	Short description	Sports
National Olympiad	Largest high-performance sport event for young athletes	46 different sports with different age categories
National Universiade	National event for higher education institutions	18 different sports
Mex games	Sport event for Mexicans living in the United States	Boxing, soccer, judo, wrestling, and taekwondo
CONDEBA games	National event for primary schools	Athletics, soccer, basketball, baseball, volleyball, badminton, and table tennis
CONADEM games	National event for high schools	Athletics, basketball, handball, baseball, softball, volleyball, and soccer
National indigenous sporting event	Recreational event for indigenous communities	Athletics, basketball, soccer, and volleyball
National event of native and traditional games and sports	Recreational event for all interested in traditional games and ancient sports	Many depending on applications and participants

Massive events are also part of this program and proved to be a good strategy to promote sports. CONADE constantly organizes running events (long and short distances), mass participation aerobic classes, or even sport-themed days along the year, motivating the population to be more active (CONADE 2008).

CONADE's crown jewel of sport participation is the Olimpiada y Paralimpiada Nacional (National Olympiad and Paralympiad). This is a high-performance multisport event for youngsters where a reported number of 3,651,308 athletes took part in 2012 during all stages. Other multisport national events coordinated by CONADE are displayed in Table 21.5.

Unfortunately there is no official information about the rates of the most practiced sports in Mexico. To identify the most practiced sports is necessary to look into research made by universities or private companies. It is normal for these institutions to focus on opinion studies trying to measure the sport activity in the regions where there are located, either cities or communities, but national studies are rare in Mexico.

A representative study by the Universidad del Valle de Mexico (UVM) surveyed 1,344 randomly selected individuals in the biggest cities in the country (e.g., Monterrey, Puebla, Guadalajara, and Mexico City). The study, conducted by the Center of Public Opinion of UVM in 2012, reported that of those practicing sport, 36 % were doing it in public facilities or public areas, 30 % in private institutions, and 22 % at school or university. The 10 sports most practiced according to UVM's survey are shown in Table 21.6 with their respective rates. Soccer is on the top followed by athletics (which includes running as a fitness activity), basketball, and swimming. Interestingly baseball does not appear in the top places, even though there is a professional baseball league in the country.

UVM reported that 68 % of their sample practiced the sport they like the most (i.e., the one they are fans of). Assuming there is a connection between being a fan

**Table 21.6** Most practiced sports in Mexico (UVM 2012)

Sport	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Soccer	387	26
Athletics	256	17
Basketball	161	11
Swimming	107	7
Volleyball	83	5
Workout gym	82	5
Cycle	63	4
Tennis	52	3
Gymnastics	52	3
American football	43	3

**Table 21.7** Sports that people like to watch, play, or be informed of – in percentage (Consulta Mitofsky 2011, 2013a)

Sport	2011	2012	2013
Soccer	60.10	52.90	63.70
Olympic swimming	–	–	52.20
Boxing	44.10	44.60	46.80
Olympic athletics	–	–	43.10
Basketball	26.80	26.90	37.00
Olympic <sup>a</sup> volleyball	–	–	35.70
Baseball	29.40	26.40	33.40
Lucha libre <sup>b</sup>	–	25.50	32.10
American football	18.00	21.50	25.70
Motor sport	–	–	21.80
Bullfighting	–	–	21.50
Chess	–	–	20.50
Tennis	–	–	17.60

<sup>a</sup>Rates for Olympic sport refers to those of London 2012

<sup>b</sup>Mexican wrestling

and practicing certain sport, it results relevant to look into the most popular sports in terms of interest.

A well-known public opinion company named Consulta Mitofsky performed a set of very comprehensive face-to-face national studies on popularity and interest in sports. Each study surveyed 1,000 Mexicans all over the country at the beginning of each year since 2007. For the survey in 2013, the company reported a confidence level of 95 % with an error not larger than  $\pm 3.1$  %, indicating a good reliability and generalization of the study.

According to Consulta Mitofsky (2013a), 60 % of the population indicates to be a sport fan, from which over 70 % of those are men. Table 21.7 shows the results for years 2011, 2012, and 2013 where soccer holds the top spot and presents and increase in popularity after dropping in 2012. Interestingly sports such as volleyball, swimming, and athletics play a big role in 2013, while in years before they were not included in the survey. This is because researchers assessed specific question referring to Olympic sports to which Mexicans answered to be fan of the aforementioned Olympic disciplines.

Boxing rose in popularity during the last 3 years, most likely due to the good results of Mexican professional fighters. Basketball is the third most popular sport (if Olympic sports are left out). Respondents to the survey said to practice basketball mainly at schools and parks, and reported to be more interested in following the National Basketball Association, the American professional league, rather than the Mexican counterpart called Liga Nacional de Baloncesto Profesional (LNBP) (Consulta Mitofksy 2013a).

Table 21.8 presents the demographic distribution of the 13 most popular sports ranked in the 2013 survey. Men showed to be more interested in all the sports than women except for Olympic volleyball where 37.8 % of women said to follow it during the London games. It also seems that as population gets older, Mexicans lose interest in sports. The only exception is baseball where the group of older than 50 years old reports a large amount of fans. Most sports are equally followed all over the country with similar rates among all four regions, except with baseball that seems to be predominately followed in the northern part of Mexico, tennis in the center, and bullfighting everywhere except in the center. The latter seems unexpected since the largest bullfighting arena in the world is located in Mexico City with a capacity of over 41,000 spectators. It is not surprising that American football, tennis, and chess are less popular in the southeast where poorer and less privileged areas are located. In the rural zones of Mexico Lucha libre (Mexican wrestling) has a greater fan base than in the urban areas.

To summarize this section on Mexican sport participation, it appears that CONADE's programs between 2008 and 2012 worked and that involvement of the population in physical activity increased with the years. Nevertheless, Mexico still faces serious problems of obesity in their population without showing much improvement in the last decade. High overweight and obesity rates exist in every demographic even in children (ENSANUT 2012) where 40.4 % spend less than 4 h a week doing physical activities (CAMBIO 2012). These health indicators contrast directly with the positive results reported by CONADE and illustrate that efforts made to activate children at schools and the general population around the country have not been enough. Finally, according to different surveys, soccer is the most popular and the most practiced sport in Mexico. In terms of popularity, soccer is followed by basketball and baseball, which are the only three sports that have a consolidated professional league in Mexico. Interestingly athletics, swimming, and volleyball are highly followed during major competitions.

## 21.6 Conclusions

Sport and physical activity in Mexico have a long history that could be dated back to the traditional *juego de pelota* (ballgame), practiced since 1400 BC by Mesoamerican cultures in the region. Today, Mexico's sport system is very complex and highly political and has low accountability between the stakeholders.



**Table 21.8** Demographic distribution of sports people like to watch, play, or be informed of – in percentage (Consulta Mitofksy 2013b)

	Soccer	Olympic swimming	Boxing	Olympic athletics	Basketball	Olympic volleyball	Baseball	Lucha libre	American football	Motor sport	Bullfighting	Chess	Tennis
<b>Gender</b>													
Men	77.4	51.3	64.2	45.9	42.5	33.5	44.7	46.9	35.6	31.3	29.6	25.2	19.2
Women	51.3	52.9	31.0	40.6	32.0	37.8	23.2	18.7	16.8	13.1	14.2	16.1	16.1
<b>Age</b>													
18–29	67.6	60.7	51.8	49.5	44.6	39.9	34.4	34.8	34.0	30.0	21.2	23.8	21.2
30–49	66.9	52.1	45.8	43.8	36.3	35.7	31.8	33.0	26.6	20.1	21.6	21.1	18.3
50 plus	54.3	42.4	42.6	34.9	29.3	30.9	34.8	27.7	14.8	14.7	21.7	15.6	12.4
<b>Region</b>													
North	65.9	48.8	52.5	39.8	39.1	35.2	52.8	35.6	31.0	18.8	21.7	24.7	15.9
Bajío	62.1	58.3	51.7	45.9	33.5	35.1	19.5	34.5	21.4	28.0	23.6	20.6	13.3
Center	66.4	57.8	44.5	46.5	40.9	41.6	23.4	26.1	30.3	25.8	19.0	23.8	24.3
Southeast	59.0	43.0	39.5	39.9	32.2	29.0	37.4	34.4	17.3	14.4	22.9	11.1	14.1
<b>Type of area</b>													
Urban	66.5	54.3	47.4	44.4	41.5	39.6	34.8	31.2	29.0	22.4	20.6	21.2	20.1
Rural	54.6	45.4	44.9	39.3	22.3	23.5	29.0	35.2	15.0	19.9	24.6	18.2	9.5

The Mexican population faces health challenges derived from low sport participation and inactivity, such as high child obesity rates and worrying overweight levels. CONADE aims to turn around these health issues and works towards creating physical activity guidelines that are clearly defined. Unfortunately, it appears that the application of the programs is not optimal. The objectives for physical activity and sport are not completely being achieved, probably because once the resources and responsibilities are out of CONADE's scope, the proper implementation of sport programs seems to be fragile.

Regardless of the health issues, Mexicans are sport fans. Currently Mexico has professional leagues of soccer, baseball, and basketball and has hosted multiple international mega sport events since 1950. Therefore, Mexico is an important global player of international organized sports in Latin America.

During the last years, the Mexican government has constantly increased the budget assigned to sports, but unfortunately the international performance of athletes does not really reflect this. Nowadays, Mexico has a booming and stable economy, a population of over 115 million people, and a territory as big as Spain, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Germany put together. Therefore, the 62 Olympic medals won by Mexico from 1900 to 2012 in 34 Summer and Winter Games do not represent the potential of the country (Lucio & Gomez 2008).

Mexico has a long way to go in sport matters. Being another country mainly focused on soccer, the government has neglected the required attention to other sports. Fortunately, after heavy negotiations between parliamentarians and senators, the law reforms to the national sport law aim to build stronger, reliable, and accountable institutions searching to professionalize the National Federations. Hopefully these changes will simplify the national sport system and provide the Mexican youth with a higher motivation to participate in sports, offering a healthier lifestyle and, in the long run, improve the country's performance in international competitions.

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