

CHAPTER 1

IMPORTANT LESSONS FROM THE PIKLER APPROACH FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT

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Nowadays, traditional education systems are getting criticized more than ever, and researchers are focusing on coming up with alternatives. From this point of view, alternative education approaches are not alternatives to traditional systems but also developed to aid and better the existing educational practices. The Pikler Approach, which is an important alternative educational approach, is a European education approach developed by Dr. Emmi Pikler, who, in 1946, established a foundation to support the physical, emotional, and social-cognitive development of children and infants who had family doctors.

Emmi Pikler (born Emilie Madleine Reich) was born in Vienna in 1902 and died in Budapest in 1984. She studied medicine in Vienna and specialized in pediatrics as the assistant of Freiherr Clemens von Pirques. She took great inspiration from the hospital where she worked and her teachers (especially from one of the research modules in Pirquet hospital and from a pediatric surgeon named Hans Salzer's empathic approach to children), which influenced her professional approach immeasurably. Pikler's husband, who was interested in child development, also contributed to her professional advancement. In 1935, Emmi Pikler started working as a pediatrician in Hungary and, in a short while, had gained the respect of her colleagues. She continued to run her own practice for ten years. After the war, she treated malnourished children, and this experience led her to found Locz, a nursing home for children.

Dr. Emmi Pikler supported the development of babies and children and thus created an environment where they would be supported and respected. Emmi Pikler managed this institute called the *Pikler Institute* for thirty-eight years.

Today, the Pikler Institute mostly inhabits orphans and children who are not cared for by their parents. Some of these children were either abandoned or were placed in the institute due to substance abuse or mental health disorders in their

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In the Pikler approach, there is a child at the center. There is a learning process in which babies direct their own development. Babies act according to their own speed, so they determine their speed according to their own wishes and developmental process. Children's behavior and development can be observed. In the educational environment, the educator guides the children. And it only takes place in the environment, monitors and observes. The materials were prepared according to the interests and needs of the children in accordance with their age and level of development.

There is no institution that adopts Pikler approach in Turkey. Various institutions in countries abroad usually have playgrounds called *Spiel Raum* and *discovery rooms*. Many of the associations established in various countries try to adopt and spread this approach in their own countries.

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