



Individual development within the framework of project-orientated teaching at the hospital school of Heckscher-Klinik, Department Rottmannshöhe

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Rottmannshöhe consists of an outpatient as well as a stationary department for mainly juveniles ranging in age from 13 to 18, who are there for various disturbance patterns, such as eating disorders, psychoses, anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorders.

42 juveniles are accommodated in single or double bedrooms and three-bed rooms in three wards. All wards are mixed with boys' and girls' bedrooms.

A large variety of therapeutic methods are applied: kinesitherapy, work and occupational therapy. The juveniles will undergo individual therapy regularly and an individually coordinated programme of therapeutic methods in a group.

The methods are manifold and apart from behaviour therapy, which is of prime importance, experience-orientated methods and the method of depth psychology are included.

Regular talks with parents or the whole family serve the purpose of mutual information, the maintenance of contact with families and the solution of relationship problems. Whenever it seems sensible and helpful, psychotherapeutic methods of treatment are applied.

The spacious estate overlooking Lake Starnberg offers the young patients, apart from therapy, various leisure activities, such as an indoor pool, a sauna, a gymnasium, a nursery plant, a sports ground and a tennis court.

The young patients, who are still required to attend school, are taught by four special education teachers, one remedial teacher, four grammar school teachers, one needlework / food technology teacher. They are divided into four groups (about ten juveniles each) with the four special education teachers being in charge of the individual groups.

Class of orientation (Orientierungsklasse): The students in this class still have problems concerning achievement and often can attend only few lessons in the mornings.

Class 7/8: Students of years 7 and 8 of all types of schools are in this study group.

Class 9: Students of year 9 are together in this study group. At the end of that school year students can take tests to gain a special qualification (Qualifizierender Hauptschulabschluss).

Class 10+: Students of year 10 and older are taught in this class.

The students are not necessarily divided into groups according to types of schools but to their stage of development as well. Therefore younger students of class 8 may join class 9 if their standard of performance and development is equivalent to that age group.

And students after the time of compulsory education who are to be observed, for example in the course of a psychosis therapy, can attend school again.

All teachers teach in all four study groups so that they will get to know all students. Thus, learning disabilities and inefficiencies can be revealed and gaps can be filled much better.

Comprehensive and cooperative observation can help the juveniles to be successful in their school careers.



When juveniles leave the hospital school they will either go back to their former school or can attend a school near the clinic. In this way they can take part in therapies but at the same time they can enjoy “normal” school life. If attendance at their former school seems to be inappropriate for various reasons, the social service at Rottmannshöhe will find a suitable school or facility for them. Their transfer to this institution will be observed by their teachers in the frame of a special mobile service (MSD – sonderpädagogischer, mobiler Dienst), if necessary.

The individual school careers and age groups of our students make a differentiation and individualization of teaching urgently necessary. This aim can be realized by projects, which are organized about six times a year. The projects are usually structured as follows:

The students come together in one classroom (Their number is about the size of a “normal” class). The topic is presented by the teachers but the students do have the chance to make amendments or improvements. Several work teams are formed who work on individually chosen parts of the topic by applying different modes of operation. According to their ability and competence they work individually on the same subject-matter and present their results to the other teams at the end.

The projects are meant to cover the contents of the curricula of the various types of schools. But the aim is to find a cross section of the contents. A recent example was the topic “Germany in the 20th century”, which could be dealt with in an interdisciplinary way and in various age groups.

At the end of each project after two weeks there is a joint event, e.g. party, dinner, fashion show through the centuries, outing.

The long-term effects of a successful learning process and a positive or negative feedback of the students will be evaluated in the end.

Thus, students can be treated individually, their strengths and weaknesses analysed and learning in a group (teamwork, social learning, strengthening of their self-confidence) can be developed.

In this way of learning there is no performance appraising, marking of tests and pressure to perform. Particularly patients with a school phobia and social anxiety disorders will develop a positive attitude towards learning and school and that will help them to recover from their negative mental disposition.

After a tour of the school and clinic the participants of the workshop became acquainted with our special way of learning, and by means of comprehensive film material they got an impression of the project-orientated and individual teaching at Rottmannshöhe.