

# What is Integral Education? Facilitating Human Emergence and the Evolution of Consciousness

## An interview with Mats Edin<sup>1</sup>

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May 22, 2004

[www.nordicintegral.com](http://www.nordicintegral.com)

### Summary

In this interview with psychologist Mats Edin we continue to explore the question: What is integral education?

Mats Edin outlines four aspects to the field of integral education. The first two being ways of teaching and ways of learning. These then being necessary in the next level, which concerns ways of designing and aligning teaching and leadership styles as environments within a school that the mind must pass through so that these best match the learning styles of the students coming from a particular sociocultural context. The fourth aspect includes the first three and places them within a broader and deeper evolutionary context. *"I get the sense that almost everything is going together here. Ideally this is what integral education is all about, nothing less than a deep concern for aligning the environments necessary for facilitating human emergence and consciousness itself."*

As Mats Edin explains, *"While each area is part of the answer, I think this fourth aspect is really where you and I have placed our focus in the work we are doing here in Sweden and Scandinavia. Because of heavy GREEN pluralism we are pushing on verticality where we purposely distinguish and call on higher levels of moral reasoning and higher values."*

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# 1. What is Integral Education?

*ND: What is Integral Education?*

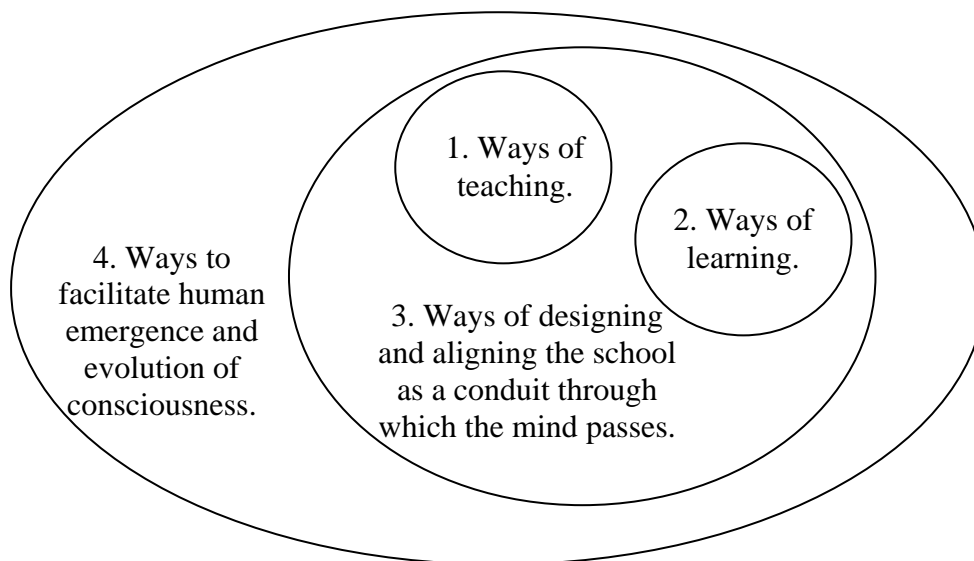
**ME:** Well it's an enormous question. We really want bring a freshness and creativity to questions like this each time we enquire into them together.

*ND: Wouldn't it be an exciting question for people interested in child development to explore using collective consciousness and enlightened communication?<sup>2</sup>*

**ME:** If we could make that a possibility something truly fantastic could happen I'm sure.

*ND: How would you answer that question based on what we are experiencing?*

**ME:** Firstly what do we, i.e. Nordic Integral, mean by "integral"? I think we mean nothing less than a leap to second tier within an evolutionary context and thus everything that Ken Wilber, Andrew Cohen, and Don Beck and others joining them are talking about and will talk about. Theoretically it has to include recognition of all of the quadrants, all lines, all levels, all states, and all stages. For our own liberation it has to include a deep recognition of who we are and that we have a choice to align ourselves, i.e. what we do, within a creative evolutionary context. And for this positive creative choice to emerge and become manifest in the world it has to include what Don Beck refers to as a MeshWORKS design. So the question, "What is integral education?" I feel covers at least the following four areas. (See figure 1).



*Figure 1. Contextually based education.*

Firstly, integral education is about *teaching*, leading and inspiring from a second tier perspective. Thus having a contextual awareness when passing on knowledge and experience.<sup>3</sup> It would mean recognising that there are different ways of teaching and relating to the world and that what is appropriate depends on the context. For example recognising the Life Conditions present and vMEMES that are active. So this aspect refers to the teacher's

<sup>2</sup> See *What is Enlightened Communication? In What Way it New and How Can it be Used to Further Human Evolution?* An interview with Chris Parish January 17, 2004. [www.nordicintegral.com](http://www.nordicintegral.com).

<sup>3</sup> See figure 3 *Spiral Dynamics and required teaching styles in An Already Victorious Position. An Impersonal perspective on Education.* An interview with Mats Edin January 14, 2004. [www.nordicintegral.com](http://www.nordicintegral.com).

ability to create the environment(s) necessary to meet his or her students at their present level(s) of development and being appreciative of the context they are in. It means the teacher's recognition that we *learn* and understand differently depending on the present level(s) of our own development, the context we are in, and the environment she or he creates, i.e. the teacher's attitude and leadership style, will very greatly influence this process. It would mean the teacher's ability to design and create AQAL leadership and pedagogical practices and environments that protect and promote the students transformation towards deeper and higher levels of truth, unity and harmony, i.e. emergence along the Spiral; thus unblocking the Spiral and facilitating emergence of the mind.

Secondly, integral education is about understanding this process we call *learning* from a second tier perspective<sup>4</sup> and that this process is contextual. For the teacher it would mean a focus on awakening within the student/group a deeper call to become – an obligation to recognise and meet them where they are and calling them forward and forever higher. For the student, learning would mean awakening positive expressions of contextual *adaptive intelligence*, intelligence that emerges in response to the Life Conditions and challenges faced, and that as Clare Grave pointed out, are in turn the product of our successes. It would mean our ability to *awaken* intelligence, a compass and a map appropriate for where they are at and awaken within them a passion for the never-ending adventure ahead no matter where they are along the Spiral or what they have experienced. Nothing less than awakening within them a direct appreciation and experience of an evolutionary or positive developmental context and thus a burning passion to learn, create, explore and take responsibility for the choices they make.

Thirdly, integral education is about using integral thinking to *design* and *align* teaching and learning styles within a school so that the school becomes as Don Beck visions, "a conduit though which the mind passes acquiring in that environment and from the neighbourhood community as well, these particular social [adaptive] intelligences."<sup>5</sup> In this way the teachers and school leaders accept responsibility for seeing themselves and the school as a vehicle for facilitating the emergence of adaptive intelligence. In this sense integral education would be focused on creating what Don Beck calls a MeshWORKS initiative to facilitate human emergence within each of the quadrants as well as along the Spiral and within the school. The school and community would thus provide developmentally appropriate learning environments for children and youth as they emerged through different levels along the spiral, supporting and challenging the mind to grow and transform to the next level and the next. Blockages to realising this positive human potential for growth in consciousness would be unblocked and actively removed and the structures carrying the vMEMES within each of the quadrants would be aligned within the community as a whole so that this process would function more like a finely tuned instrument.

And fourthly, integral education is nothing less than *facilitating human emergence and the evolution of consciousness itself*, so that this field is itself embedded in an overarching framework of integral initiatives.

## **2. Facilitating human emergence and consciousness itself**

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<sup>4</sup> See *An Already Victorious Position. An Impersonal perspective on Education*. An interview with Mats Edin January 14, 2004. [www.nordicintegral.com](http://www.nordicintegral.com) for an outline of ways of learning.

<sup>5</sup> See *Transforming the Nordic Region. It's Time Once Again for an Exploring Society*. An Interview with Dr. Don Beck, September 10, 2003. [www.nordicintegral.com](http://www.nordicintegral.com).

**ME:** While each area is part of the answer, I think this fourth aspect is really where you and I have placed our focus in the work we are doing here in Sweden and Scandinavia. Because of heavy GREEN pluralism we are pushing on verticality where we purposely distinguish and call on higher levels of moral reasoning and higher values. We often illustrate verticality by focusing on moral development. Much like pathfinders pointing out the terrain, we are showing which way is up and leading to more maturity and responsibility, and which way is down. In our interviews with teachers and school leaders we are having people report back that they now recognise that they are somewhere, that they came from somewhere and they're going somewhere higher.

*ND: It's a very significant breakthrough. It can be illustrated in the following statement from one of the teachers I recently interviewed at Svansjöns resursskola<sup>6</sup>: "I now experience that there exists a positive leadership hierarchy. I previously believed that everybody should be treated equally, has equal value, should be equally included in decision making and that each and every student should be allowed to express their thoughts and opinions exactly as they wished. I have now learned that this can't be so, but that as a teacher I must lead and that it is I who must guide them, consequently there has to exist a positive hierarchy."*

**ME:** To have people reporting this sort of development in values and thinking points to change. They seem to have moved from a position where they felt themselves floundering in looking for solutions, having a sense of being pretty much lost and unsure as to who they were or where they were going. I feel shivers run up my spine when I hear these sorts of report from teachers, students and parents because when we succeed with these cases, whether it's one person, one team of teachers or a whole school – it's these living examples that are actually going to shatter the hold of the pluralistic worldview as we know it. It indicates that we are successfully breaking through and unblocking the barrier created by negative GREEN.

*ND: For sure, these initial reports indicate an awakening to something higher. But these are still small and isolated groups of people, a lot more needs to happen and very urgently.*

**ME:** This fourth area of integral education means pushing the kids and adults to see what their actions look like from the outside. We need to be very tough on teachers and school leaders centred in negative GREEN because of the crisis they generate by letting RED stagnate and run wild. I think this following example from one of your interviews with the staff at Svansjöns resursskola, though very dramatic, illustrates what can and does happen. "The students suddenly took control of the school. They smashed windows, screamed, climbed on to the roof, threw stones at the teachers and behaved so badly that we had to call in the Police. The teachers felt overwhelmed. We all felt powerless. We had given up and didn't know what to do."

I mean the classic GREEN sensitive-self approach to this sort of crisis is to say to these kids, "How would you feel if somebody did that to you?" But from a second tier perspective where our aim is to facilitate the emergence of consciousness itself, talking GREEN to the RED meme is pointless and a complete waste of time, money and resources. Very little good is going to happen. And as a society we can't afford to continue this way – in fact to do so is morally wrong.

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<sup>6</sup> Svansjöns resursskola in Malmö is an alternative school for students with behavioural problems in year 1-6.

Whereas what we are doing is helping GREEN discriminate what they are saying and doing. Asking them to look at themselves from the outside, to become very discriminative and objective about their own thinking, level of moral reasoning and actions. This is impossible so long as GREEN is caught up in talking and thinking about their subjective reality as the highest and most authentic truth: my depression, my stressful situation, how everything and everyone else but me is to blame and about my right to express this and lay it on whoever I want whenever I want. Listening to this and telling them they personally are doing a great job and giving them a shoulder to cry on is not going to lead them anywhere positive. So we say instead, "What do your actions look like in the eyes of your colleagues and people outside this school? Does this school and its teachers have a good reputation? What kind of relationship do you have with the parents?" "If there is this verticality in terms of moral development and increasing responsibility, then what level of maturity and moral reasoning are your actions presently coming from? Are you thinking more about yourself or the purpose of this school?" "Because unless your own thinking and level of maturity is evolving you can't expect these insecure, impulsive and egocentric students to evolve. You're leading by example and that means your own thinking and values have to change first." "So, how were you thinking several weeks ago in the middle of this crisis and how are you thinking now? How is your thinking changing? How is your behaviour maturing? Tell me what has happened."

### **3. Ushering in verticality and the positive growth process**

**ME:** In this sort of situation you and I have to be very challenging, demanding and uncompromising in order to break through the conditioned barriers that negative GREEN is creating in education and leadership today. And as Don Beck says, "We have to be bold, but not attack"<sup>7</sup> which means we also have to be very humble. Basically GREEN allows everyone to be a victim instead of taking responsibility, while the decision to choose responsibility and positive growth really doesn't take more than a split second.

We need to point out to them that this positive growth process is already happening, but that they are not recognising it and thus actually preventing growth. Their focus is instead on self-image and complaining about the negative behaviour of other people.

*ND: I can give you an example of this from Svansjöns resursskola. I began one of my first meetings with them by relating a shared experience and observation I had had with them, "Did you notice that at the table this morning while we were eating breakfast, that one of the boys always said 'please' and 'thank you' when asking for something to be passed to him?"*

*"Oh yes I saw that, but that's because he wants attention."*

*"That's my point; we were five adults and three kids and no one gave him any positive recognition. In fact did you see his body language when I thanked him for asking so politely?"*

*"Oh yes, I saw how you comment that he was very polite. But it's rarely that they behave politely. Did you see the gestures that other boy was giving us the whole time and did you hear his bad language? What can we do to change that?"*

*"Well that's an important question. But before we can answer that, what I'm going to say is going to sound very provocative because we are used to interpreting things personally. What*

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<sup>7</sup> See *Reality Based Education. It's Time to be Bold but not Attack*. An interview with Don Beck May 12, 2004 [www.nordicintegral.com](http://www.nordicintegral.com).

*we are concerned with here is far more important than how any of you personally feel. All these problems you are describing are going to fade away once everyone here signs on to the attitude needing to be expressed and starts praising and encouraging these kids for what they are already doing well and stop focusing on yourself, your own feelings and all the problems you feel they have. How you feel personally is your own problem. It's literally of no interest here if we want to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. When you choose to focus on yourself – wanting to be seen by others, telling them how you feel and what your opinion is – you reduce yourself to an egocentric victim and that is the level these boys are at presently.<sup>8</sup> When you choose to allow each other to behave this way there is no distinction in maturity between them and what you are expressing. And as you were reporting, many of you have started using bad language since working here. Everyone ends up at the bottom of the pyramid and you create the crisis you just had. Nobody accepts responsibility for their behaviour or what they're saying. Look at the quality of our listening and discussion in this meeting. You're experiencing a level of conversation that's way above that which normally happens. And that's the direction we have to choose to go and defend is it not? "*

*"Wow, I have never thought about that possibility."*

**ME:** Once this positive opening is there, there is no backing down, and we can begin looking at how they as teachers need to raise the level of their thinking and behaviour in order to recognise and motivate this positive growth process in children.

*ND: When they say, "yes" to this positivity it puts evolutionary tension on us as well. But the result is very dramatic, as one teacher explained, "Over the short period of time we have had these meetings with you it feels like I have returned home to a truer sense of who I am, and an understanding that that is who I am. It is important that I dare to be an adult and a leader for these students."*

**ME:** Making people aware that they are a vital part of a larger developmental context is very important.

#### **4. An impersonal developmental context**

*ND: Yes though I get the feeling that this context is very different to what we normally think of as being development. Can you explain what we are bringing when we talk about this developmental context in education?*

**ME:** Normally we think of development as being something personal, whereas the context now is very impersonal. So probably the most important thing that we are bringing to integral education is this impersonal compass and a map – getting people to realise that there is something deeper and truer within them that wants to evolve, a part of them that recognises goodness, that they came from somewhere less developed and they're going somewhere higher. And it's not just an intellectual model but also a living awareness that the individual can directly experience, and this happens when we are communicating with the people we are meeting.

We are listening but at the same time asking questions that open awareness for this larger integral second tier perspective. We are pointing out the terrain and making depth obvious to

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<sup>8</sup> See leadership pyramid model in *An Already Victorious Position. An Impersonal perspective on Education*. An interview with Mats Edin January 14, 2004. [www.nordicintegral.com](http://www.nordicintegral.com)

them and thus proving a point – that there does exist a much larger objective context for all of us to make sense of what is happening. And that this makes obsolete our previous GREEN personal subjective context where we are conditioned to listen and give equal value to each other's personal reality as if it were separate and needed to be equally honoured. We were recognising diversity but not honouring vertical depth, hence allowing RED to do as it pleased.

*ND: In regards to integral education it seems that we are concerned with not just bringing an integral map but more specifically awakening a moral compass. Is that right?*

**ME:** Yes exactly. We also meet people who are pretty ambitious and who are interested in what we are saying. And I get the impression that they have less of the heavy GREEN meme and instead a pretty healthy ORANGE meme within them. This is very evident in the fact that GREEN generally tends to hate hierarchies. And as Don Beck expressed,<sup>9</sup> a strong resistance to changing ones thinking in this case is actually an expression of BLUE, influenced by teachers and school headmasters having passed through a very heavy BLUE academic world. Whereas the people I'm referring to generally have no problem at all in accepting the existence of natural hierarchies. So I think that we are meeting another category of people who are more centred in ORANGE, who are open to what we are saying and are sensing this verticality for something higher and better.

When GREEN gets stuck we are pushing them to look at what autonomy could mean. For them they lost sight of it completely and ended up as victims. So we say things like, "Maybe you have to take a chance here. Maybe you have to leave the safety of your swamp and get to something higher." Whereas healthy ORANGE already recognises autonomy but now needs to honour vertical depth and promote goodness and by that I mean awakening to a higher level of moral care, "I'm doing this not for my self, not just for the organisation, but enabling the emergence the intelligence of the whole community". And another important aspect that attracts ORANGE is the importance of successful results. It's not so much interested in the theory as it is in the practical application that solves the problem.

And I think one crucial reason why we are getting results such as the one at Svansjöns resursskola is that we are using Andrew Cohen's dichotomy of the human condition as expressed in the model of choice (see figure 2) which is based on Andrew Cohen's "Hell model and Heaven model". When we are talking to students, teachers and parents we are actually guiding them to recognise this dichotomy within them. They have a choice between choosing the *victim position* by making bad and negative choices, and the *freedom position* by accepting responsibility and choosing good and positive choices.

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<sup>9</sup> *Reality Based Education. It's Time to be Bold but not Attack.* An interview with Dr. Don Beck May 12, 2004 [www.nordicintegral.com](http://www.nordicintegral.com).

## It's your choice!

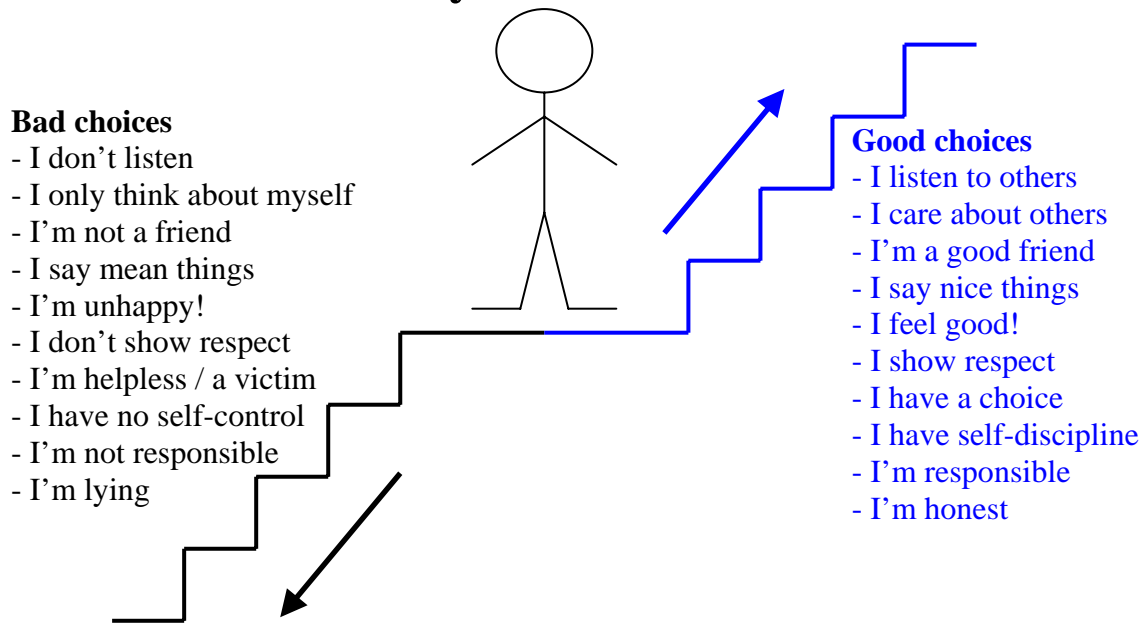


Figure 2. *It's your choice!* (Adapted from the Hell and Heaven model by Andrew Cohen).

### 5. Awakening the authentic self

**ND:** Patrick Bryson explained recently the impact Andrew Cohen's models are having in awakening children to the authentic self.<sup>10</sup> He explained how children interpret the Five Tenets and how they had focused on the second tenet the Law of Volitionality as, "I can always choose." So that one of the most important distinguishing qualities about being a human being is that we have this power of choice. This brings to integral education both a moral and spiritual dimension and does so by awakening an immediately experienced vertical evolutionary context no matter where one is along the Spiral.

As Patrick Bryson explains, "They see the Heaven model as an escalator going upwards, a direction they have trust in and that makes them feel more connected with each other and more caring for each other. They see the ego model as a slide going downwards, into doing your own thing, and being separate, being rude or not caring for people."

**ME:** Yes I loved this interview. And I think these models really get children to consciously choose to shift away from an egocentric perspective. In this position they just think about themselves, don't care about others, tell lies, don't take responsibility, lack self-discipline, behave disrespectfully towards other people and describe the feeling as that of going down a staircase to be alone in a cold dark cellar where they regard themselves as being a victim, and not having any choice for taking control over their actions and behaviour. In effect they create an atmosphere of pure negativity that affects everybody around them.

Choosing the other side however is not just positivity and goodness but rather a sense of verticality and upward growth. For children it means a sense of thinking about others, taking responsibility, telling the truth, being respectful, caring about others, having self-discipline,

<sup>10</sup> *A Moral Dimension to Parenting and Teaching. An Introduction to Awakening Children to the Authentic Self and an Evolutionary Context.* An interview with Patrick Bryson March 24, 2004. [www.nordicintegral.com](http://www.nordicintegral.com)

and thus regarding themselves as always having a choice between doing something bad or doing something good. This works, as you have experienced, with both nine-year-old students as well as teachers with over twenty years of experience.

*ND: That's right. They're able to experience and identifying these two conditions within themselves and the choice they have.*

**ME:** It's amazing because it's not something that has to be explained in detail, they can actually understand and start using it as we talk about it. We are actually giving them a very simple and yet very profound map and helping them discover their own hidden compass that is already craving for goodness and wants to emerge, create goodness and grow.

*ND: But it's very necessary that we recognise it.*

**ME:** Exactly. And this is the battle for us just now in Sweden and Scandinavia. This compass is already there within them. We don't have to engineer it or program it to do goodness. All that is required is a teacher or leader who can recognise this choice and exemplify this capacity to choose goodness consistently so that their students can recognise the same potential within themselves. We actually have the immediate knowledge and experience necessary for filling in the details – when you start asking them to explain these two different sides, these two different choices. It puts them in immediate touch with this moral decision for choosing growth and goodness and it becomes a very empowering and thrilling experience for both the student and the teacher.

And that's really what we are bringing to this question concerning, "What is integral education?" We are bringing in spirituality; we are bringing in the authentic self in children. We are moving on from this very confusing GREEN process thinking and the need for time that psychologists talk and talk endlessly about.

*ND: Exactly and this ability to experience the authentic self can happen very quickly for both children and teachers. But what's needed is to be exposed to someone experienced in this in order to appreciate this internal compass within oneself. Ideally what is required is to be immersed in a culture (parents, teachers, sports coaches, etc) that is concerned with pointing this out and I guess that gets back to the first three areas you talked about in regard to integral education.*

**ME:** Yes exactly. I get the sense that almost everything is going together here. Ideally this is what integral education is all about, nothing less than a deep concern for aligning the environments necessary for facilitating human emergence and consciousness itself.

*ND: It's never been done!*

**ME:** That's right. But we have the choice to make it happen.

Nick Drummond  
May 22, 2004