

## Restructuring the National System of Education in England and its impact on the Learning Process

Dr Boukhalkhal Abdeldjebar <sup>1\*</sup>, Dr Khalki Smaïne <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Tahri Mohamed University Bechar, boukhalkhal.abdeldjebar@univ-bechar.dz

<sup>2</sup>Tahri Mohamed University Bechar, khalki.smaïne@univ-bechar.dz

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### Abstract:

The concept of Education, though having different definitions and being controversial and debatable, represents a continuous process of learning through formal or informal instruction. Throughout human life, education is considered as one of the most important aspects of the development of individual and society. Thus, many educationalists believe the advance of any society depends on the quality of its education. Thus, any country should adapt, conceive or restructure its own education system according to its needs. The present article attempts to account for the necessity to restructure the English system of education by introducing secondary education as a transitional stage to further education. It is convenient and for the sake of understanding such reform, this article also endeavors to shed light on the obstacles that faced the development of national education in England and to which extent it is similar and advantageous to our educational system.

**Key words:** education, secondary school, reform, Act, national education, England

### ملخص:

على الرغم من وجود تعريفات مختلفة لمفهوم التعليم وعلى كونه موضوع مثير للجدل وقابل للنقاش، فإنه يمثل عملية مستمرة للتعليم من خلال التعليم الرسمي أو غير الرسمي. طوال حياة الإنسان يعتبر التعليم أحد أهم جوانب تنمية الفرد والمجتمع. يعتقد العديد من التربويين أن تقدم أي مجتمع يعتمد على جودة تعليمه. لهذا يجب على أي مجتمع تكييف نظام التعليم الخاص به أو تصوره أو إعادة هيكلته وفقاً لاحتياجاته. في هذا السياق، يحاول هذا المقال تفسير الأسباب من وراء ضرورة إعادة هيكلة نظام تعليم الإنجليزي وسبب إدخال التعليم الثانوي كمرحلة انتقالية. في الأخير يسعى هذا المقال إلى إلقاء الضوء على العقبات التي واجهت تطوير التعليم الوطني في إنجلترا وإلى أي حد يمكن المقارنة به والاستفادة منه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعليم، المدرسة الثانوية، الإصلاح، القانون، التعليم الوطني، إنجلترا

\* Corresponding author

## **Introduction**

During the 19th century, works in the domain of education was very remarkable compared to all the previous legislations that before 1870. However, in spite of its 'partial' success, the Act of 1870 or the Forster Act was highly critical. Thus, it is convenient to deal with the most influential legislations in the domain of education that were promulgated after 1870. The progress of education after the Act of 1870 and the reasons that led to the enactment of an Act in 1902 are seen as the major pillars of understanding why the English legislators thought of reforming their education system. The study of national education in England is one of the most influential experiments that must be studied in order to improve our educational system in Algeria, which was totally based on religious instruction during this period of time.

### **1. Reasons behind the Three Main Sectors of Education**

In 1902, Arthur James Balfour<sup>1</sup> studied the effects of the Act of 1870, for him the main point, which was realized by the Act of 1870, was the creation of English elementary schools and setting the foundation of compulsory schooling of all children of five and of 13 in England and Wales. However, the Act of 1870 showed some ineffectiveness and was highly criticized. There had been unpredicted consequences and important mistakes in this Act (Lemosse, 1992, p. 43).

The offensive competition between the deliberate schools and the rate-supported board schools encouraged a sort of separation between the two kinds of schools. Hence, the expenses had expanded a reality that Forster, Prime Minister, had completely misjudged. Second, the damage which was put on neighborhood accounts by rudimentary instruction and the educational committees encouraged lavishness since they were answerable for schooling and not for the administration of general use (Hamilton, 1883, p. 283)

Subsequently, Arthur James Balfour inferred that the boards were a sort of a trouble, and proposed that they ought to be deleted. In this manner, three faults must be corrected.

The voluntary schools had been left to fend for themselves, the teacher training had been deficiently provided, and there was no link between the three principal sectors of education: Primary, Secondary, and University. Arthur James Balfour attempted to compensate all the inadequacies found in his Bill by depicting a wide picture of education in England. The board schools were indeed receiving five times the amount that the voluntary schools could rely on. Their proponents, on the other hand, argued that because they were truly public in character, they should be the only ones to get public funds. Obviously, the idea that the school boards were created to supplement rather than replace the existing voluntary schools was not one that Balfour was willing to accept.

## **2. The Need for a Secondary Education**

The year 1902 marked an important phase in the history of English education and the beginning of a new era. It was the culminating point in the movement towards unification that found expression in Sir John Gorst's Bill of 1896 and in the Board of Education Act of 1899. It was a great venture in municipalising education. For the first time education of all grades, "primary, secondary, and higher", was brought under the control of a single local authority.

For some years past, there had been a growing determination on the part of Government to insist on the rights of parents to denominational instruction in every type of school, and this feeling grew as the financial position of Voluntary schools became more and more untenable. Opinion among Churchmen was divided, as to the wisdom of accepting rate aid for Church schools. The majority, however, had no such principles. Their position was well represented by the resolutions passed at the joint conference in London in 1901 (Richards, 1970, p. 180)

The resolutions were turning around three main points. The first one was that the cost of maintaining secular instruction in all schools should be borne out of public funds,

whether local or imperial. The second considered the capital expenditure on buildings, structural repairs, and alterations should be thrown on the body to which the school belonged. Whereas the third one saw that the Voluntary school managers should appoint and dismiss teachers, but that one-third of their number should be appointed by the local authority. Fourth, that wherever a reasonable number of parents of any denomination demanded it dogmatic instruction might be provided in any school by that denomination at its own cost (Lemosse, 1992, p. 48)

The principles of insisting on parents' rights to denominational instruction in all types of schools and accepting rate aid for Church schools were institutionalized in the following Education Bill. Because of its importance, the Prime Minister was in charge of the Bill. Nonconformists and Radicals were outraged by the contents of Bill, which they saw as a betrayal (Richards, 1970, p. 196)

### **3. Balfour's Education Act, 1902**

The Education Act of 1902 abolished school boards and school attendance committees. This Act established county councils, county boroughs, and the local authority for elementary and higher education, with the provision that non-county borough councils with populations greater than 10,000 and urban district councils with populations greater than 20,000 should be the local authority for elementary education only in their own area (Eaglesham, 1962, p. 175)

Under a framework approved by the Board of Education, each Council was given the authority to elect an Education Committee. The Education Committee was made up of sixteen members and managed to meet four times a year. The Council appointed members to the committee. The instruction might be provided in any school run by that denomination. The Council had to designate the majority of the members of the Education Committee. The remainders were to be made up of representatives of local people with expert educational

knowledge. Each Committee had to include both men and women. All powers were accorded to the Council by the Act, with the exception of raising and borrowing funds which may be assigned to this Committee (H.C.Barnard, 1947, p. 214)

The local authority's responsibilities included those of the School Boards and School Attendance Committees, as well as the control of all secular instructions in all public elementary schools in the district. They also had to consider the educational needs of their community and take steps that seemed desirable to them after consultation with the Board of Education. The Council's rating powers were unlimited, with the exception that the higher education rate in provinces could not exceed two pounds. As a result, the Local Education Authority gained control of two types of elementary schools. The first type was related to the schools that were provided by the State. This type provided free meals to poor children. The non-provided schools were the second type. This type was a state-funded school, supported and managed entirely by the Local Education Authority (Pipkin, 1931, p. 70).

The non-provided schools were managed by a Board of six people who were the foundation managers appointed by the Education Committee. These administrators were required to keep the school material in good condition, with the exception that the cost of reasonable depreciation was a charge against the treasury. They were required to follow the local authority's instructions in regard to secular education and to allow the local authority to use of the building for educational purposes on no more than three days per week. The managers also had the authority to appoint their own teachers, subject to the approval of the Local Education Committee Authority (Pipkin, 1931, p. 75).

In non-provided schools, religious teaching had to conform to the trust deed, and was under the control of the managers. This was known as the Kenyon-Slaney Clause (uslegal.com, s.d.)<sup>2</sup> and was introduced to check undue clerical interference. On the other

side, in provided schools, religious instruction was to be subject to the Cowper-Temple Clause of the Act of 1870 (uslegal.com, s.d.).<sup>3</sup>

A new system of grants was devised, applicable to all schools. The term elementary school was limited to a school held during the day-time, and might not include for grant, save under special conditions, children over 16 years of age. Powers were also granted to the Local Education Authority to pay the reasonable travelling expenses of teachers and children attending school or college (Stuart, 1970, p.75).

In Algeria, for the sake of comparison, less than half of all children who complete primary school phase complete their education. There really are three secondary streams: general, specialized, and technical / vocational. Those in the first two of these spend three years studying before writing their *baccalauréat de l'enseignement secondaire*, which is the key to tertiary education. Technical / vocational education can last between one and four years and is designed to prepare students for a career in industry. In some cases, it may also lead to further education (Naylor, 2015 , p. 400).

#### **4. The Aftermath of Balfour's Act, 1902**

These provisions were extended and adapted to London by the London Education Act of 1903. However, there was no doubt that it represented a huge step forward in the history of English education, comparable to the Act of 1870. The State abandoned its policy of supervising and assisting Voluntary Association work and took full responsibility for the entire secular education of the people. In other words, it marked the end of a period of partition and the start of a period of annexation (Eaglesham, 1962, p. 178).

As a result, all levels of education were brought together than was at any previous period in history. The interdependence of all classroom sessions had become more perceptible, and the transition of children from elementary school to higher education had been made possible. Greater focus was laid on the organization of Vocational schools, and

even on the issues of child labor. Teachers' collective position, particularly in non-provided schools, had steadily improved by granting them some privileges like raising their wage rates and implementing new means of teaching and training accommodation. There had been a great development of interest in educational experiments, and a considerable expansion of training college accommodation and of means provided for enabling teachers to keep in touch with the latest developments in educational methods (Robinson, 2002, p. 159)

In short, the existence of strong and alert local authorities responsible for the educational policy of their particular areas had done a good deal towards raising the general level of national education. But at the same time, the question of the right attitude of the State towards denominational schools had acquired a new importance.

With the return of the Liberal party to power, the Chief Secretary Augustine Birrell (*Encyclopædia Britannica* 2008 ultimate DVD, 2008)<sup>4</sup> brought in an important Bill in 1906 for remedying the grievances of Nonconformists. The dual system of Council and Voluntary schools were to be abolished. After 1 January 1908, all public rate-aided Voluntary schools were to be transferred to the local authority. The terms of transfer of these schools were to be settled by the local authority and the school trustees, or, failing them, by three special Commissioners, against whose decision there was to be no appeal. The Cowper-Temple clause was to be enforced in all schools and no teacher was to be bound to give religious instruction. In the transferred schools, teaching of a definitely denominational character might be given on not more than two mornings in the week at the expense of the particular denomination (Robinson, 2002, p. 172).

In the House of Lords, Birrell's Bill was revised to permit for denominational teaching in all types of schools, as well as for the establishment of State-aided schools. The latter provision was enacted in response to the views of a significant portion of the Church, which had been opposed to the policy of subsidizing denominational schools through rates. There

was also money set aside for the construction of denominational schools in areas where there was none. The Bill was abandoned because the House refused to compromise. Birrell's Bill's forms were the most significant attempt to amend the Act of 1902. In 1908, McKenna (*Encyclopædia Britannica* 2008 ultimate DVD, 2008),<sup>5</sup> then Minister of Education, sought to limit rate aid to schools that conformed to the Cowper-Temple clause. Local authorities were to be responsible for seeing that adequate "provided" school accommodation was within the reach of every child who needed it. Accordingly, the trustees of "non-provided" schools were to be invited to transfer their schools to the Local Education Authority (Montmorency, 1902, p. 170).

Facilities were to be granted for the use of the school premises on Saturdays and Sundays, and in single school parishes daily before or after school hours for denominational teaching. Where managers did not wish to transfer their schools, they might contract out. They would then cease to receive rate aid; they would be given an Exchequer grant not exceeding 47s. Per child per annum, providing they satisfied the requirements of the Board of Education with regard to efficiency, staffing, etc., and they would be allowed to charge fees up to 9d. a week. This option was not open to managers where the school was the only one in the parish (Lemosse, 1992, p. 56).

## **5. Legislation and Education Improvements**

Other Bills were proposed for the sake of improving education. The Bishop of St. Asaph's proposed a Bill on similar lines. He proposed to lease non-provided schools to the local authority, but he required undenominational instruction in all schools and facilities for denominational teaching on at least three days in the week in every school, whether Council or transferred, during school hours, but not at the expense of the local authority. In 1908, Runciman's Bill proposed to limit rate aid to Council schools, to require undenominational religious instruction at the morning session, and to allow denominational teaching at the request of the parent on two mornings in the week providing there was sufficient



accommodation for the purpose within the school building. He also proposed to recognize a special class of State-aided schools not under the control of the Local Education Authority provided they were organized into associations (Searby, 1981, p. 23).

In the following year, an Educational Settlement Committee, composed of people of different political opinions, issued a series of proposals. Briefly, they proposed that wherever only one school existed in a particular area, that school should be provided by the Local Education Authority, and existing non-provided schools should accordingly be transferred. Proposals were also made for increasing the efficiency of religious teaching in Council schools, for continuing rate aid to denominational schools, and for encouraging a diversity of types of schools in districts where more than one school was possible. There, the real difficulty was the single school area. A settlement was beset with difficulties because of the diversity of conflicting ideals and interests involved, which were not limited to the members of the recognized religious communities (Searby, 1981, p. 28).

One of the most characteristic features of the twentieth century was the attention that had been given to questions concerning the improvement of the individual's physical condition. After realizing that the environment of home and street was amenable to remedial treatment, much thought had been given to the question of how to improve the physique of the nation and to determine whether or not the race had deteriorated. It had been shown that there was a great deal of physical unfitness existing among the people, and the determination had arisen to ameliorate and as far as possible prevent it by improving the health conditions of the children. Attention had been focused on the children because the State had for years been caring for their mental development (Curtis, 1963, p.123).

As a result of this movement, two significant Acts were enacted. The Education (Provision of Meals) Act of 1906 attempted to educate children who were destitute. It empowered local governments to form "School Canteen Committees" whose mission was to

provide appropriate meals at a low cost for children in their area who were unable to fully benefit from the education provided for them due to a lack of food. The Education Committee was required to provide land, buildings, equipment, as well for the Canteen Committee, and to charge parents for the food provided.

The Education Act of 1907 went a step further by mandating that every child in school be medically examined. It gave authorities the power to set up vacation schools, vacation classes, play-centers, or other forms of recreation during the holidays or at other times, either at the school or elsewhere, such as in the country. At the same time, it imposed on all local governments the obligation to provide for medical examinations of children immediately before, at the time of, or as soon as possible after, enrollment (Curtis, 1963, p.130).

This marked the beginning of the State system of school medical inspection in this country. Hitherto, few authorities had undertaken anything in the nature of the systematic individual medical inspection, although it was a well-established practice abroad. Useful pioneer work had been done in London and elsewhere, and of course in a number of secondary schools. Each Local Education Authority had to set up its school medical department, and a corresponding department was established by the Board of Education. Special grants were made in aid of the expenditure incurred by local authorities on the medical treatment of children attending public elementary schools and on work supplementary to medical treatment, as well as for children attending special schools and suffering from tuberculosis or from ailments for which open-air treatment was especially suitable. Apart from the more strictly medical aspect of the work, the result was already seen in the emphasis on open-air teaching, the provision of school baths, increased attention to clothing and personal hygiene, to physical education, to the lighting, cleaning and ventilating of school buildings, to school furniture and reading books. A good deal was also being done to educate careless and indifferent parents to a sense of their duties (Pipkin, 1931, p. 72).

Since 1902, the cost of education per child had increased by more than a half. At the same time, other local institutions had grown, and the rates were not indefinitely elastic. The seriousness of the situation was recognized by Binell's Bill (1906), who proposed to assign £1,000,000 for the relief of local rates, and McKenna's Bill (1908) had in view an extra contribution from the Government of nearly one million. The educational finance was one of the pressing problems of the moment. One way out of the difficulty would be to make the entire cost of education a charge on Imperial funds. Such a policy would be most unsatisfactory, as it would lead to a highly centralized system of education and management that was contrary to prevailing sentiment in this country. English opinion undoubtedly favored local management as a check on bureaucracy. It was more democratic in character and allowed greater initiative, variety and elasticity (Pipkin, 1931, p. 73).

The problem on which attention was beginning to be focused was how to increase the contribution from the central funds, by transferring some of the fund from the ratepayer and imposing it on the taxpayer, while at the same time guaranteeing an efficient local administration. At the same time, other suggestions were being made to reform the present system of local rating by distributing the burden more equitably than at present and securing greater economy in administration by grouping education authorities and establishing a uniform system over large areas. These were questions, however, that extend far beyond the limits of educational administration and finance. The tendency seemed to increase the contribution from the Government in such a way as to support poor districts where the ratable value was lowest and where the burden of education was often highest. How far such a policy was capable of extension without over-stepping the limit of sound finance was another question. Nevertheless, the improvements in education did not stop at this level. The period that came after the Balfour Act of 1902 was very significant. Thus, it is convenient to give importance to this period in order to understand the progress of national education in England (Montmorency, 1902, p. 180).

## 6. The Unification of all Grades of Education After 1902

The Act of 1902 created a new phase in the history of teacher training. The Act of 1870 increased the number of elementary schools dramatically without correspondingly increasing the resources available to train teachers. The establishment of University Day Training Colleges in 1890 provided some relief, but despite of this, the annual output of educated instructors was just 2,791, while the average attendance had climbed to 5,030,219 students (Eaglesham, 1962, p. 195).

In order to encourage local authorities to spend public money on teachers training, the Board of Education proposed to contribute three-fourths of the cost of buildings. At the same time, a number of new denominational colleges came into existence. The result of this policy was seen by the fact that the output of trained teachers between 1900 and 1913 was doubled.

The first training college regulations were issued in 1904, and the Board of Education adopted a new attitude toward colleges. In the first place, it took control of staff appointments, and in the second, the general curriculum was redesigned. English, history and geography, elementary mathematics, and elementary science were all required subjects, but there was no uniform curriculum. A comprehensive list of optional subjects was also included to allow for specialization, and students were allowed to enter for degrees with greater caution. At the same time, students in training colleges were no longer permitted to take the standard certificate examination, but instead had to take one that had been specially designed for them (Curtis, 1953, p. 150).

The Balfour Act of 1902 eliminated "model schools" from college control and installed them under the authority of the Local Education Authority. In 1904, the Code needed all elementary schools having received grants to open their doors to students for the

purpose of practical instruction in order to make professional training more real and to provide more opportunities for practice. (Eaglesham, 1962, p. 155)

The unification of all grades of education under one local authority by the Act of 1902 was the signal for the breakdown of the pupil teacher system. In 1903, the new movement began with the issue of special pupil teacher regulations, and by 1907, a new system was at work. Briefly, two principles underlay the various changes that characterised this period. The first was to facilitate and continue the preliminary education of future teachers by giving them a good secondary school education up to 16 or 17 years of age. The second was to limit strictly the employment of pupil teachers to half the number of school meetings and to provide for their education at other times. (Robinson, 2002, pp. 159-172)

No one could become a pupil teacher under 16 years of age and the apprenticeship was limited to two years. During these years, he had to continue to receive instruction in a recognised Pupil Teacher Centre. On the other hand, at the age of 16 any boy or girl who had been three years in a secondary school and signified his intention of becoming a teacher might, if his circumstances required it, claim for an annual bursary, at the close of which he might, providing he had passed the necessary qualifying examination, enter a training college or serve for one year as a student teacher, teaching half time (Barnard, 1947, p. 214).

The result of these changes had undoubtedly been to increase the general efficiency of students entering training colleges, but they had served to check the entry of many into the profession. Many parents were unable to afford to allow their children to remain non-wage earners until sixteen. The more strict conditions of pupil teachership had practically closed the profession to boys and girls in country districts. A considerable number of teachers were attracted by more profitable careers that open out to secondary school pupils at sixteen or seventeen years of age (Barnard, 1947, p. 223).

## 7. Conclusion

The development of any society depends on the quality of its education. Thus, the English gave a great importance to the field of education. Through this article, it becomes obvious that the early initiatives in the domain of education were not sufficient and there was much to be done. The quality and type of instruction given were not suitable and beneficial for the common people, especially during the Industrial Revolution. However, the problem was not in how much education was available, but in what type of education should be given.

The beginnings of a national educational organization were not evident. This was because education was not the business of the State. In addition, the evolution of education in England had been a slow and peaceful growth, though accompanied by much hard thinking and vigorous parliamentary struggle. All changes had come only in response to much pressure. In fact, the evolution of a national educational system in England had been the dominant characteristic of the political, social, and educational progress of the British people.

The progress of a national educational system in England was characterized by political and religious achievements. The achievements that characterized England were, for example, social reform, popular enlightenment, religious toleration, freedom of the press, and scientific and industrial progress. In England, the eighteenth century was characterized by a new attitude toward the educational problem and an obvious extension of educational opportunity.

In England, the education reforms were caused by the needs of qualified workers and trade, which demanded mass literacy for workers and better education for the managerial class. Through this legislative growth, new improvements were seen at the level of the curriculum and at the teachers' status. England faced, during the beginning of the

twentieth, a radical change in its socio-economic and technological aspect. During this period of time, not only England, but all Europe suffered from the shadow of the Great Wars and the Economic Depression of the 1920s. The impacts of such wars and such economic depression led to a radical change on the socio-educational basis. The major changes that were brought about by the First World War could be classified under two ranks: the first one was related to the disaster caused by the War and the second one was the importance that was given by the State to education.

The process of education may differ from one country to another. For example, in Algeria the evolution of education and its beliefs were totally different than in England. Before the French conquest in Algeria in 1830, religious instructions were the only form of education offered to the Algerian people. When the French colonized Algeria, they confiscated all the traditional educational funding. During the French colonisation in Algeria, the colonizer reinstated the use of Madrasa schools or Muslim Quranic Schools and established primary schools that were both Arabic and French. However, during the Third Republic, the Parisian government attempted to integrate Algerians into French culture, but their efforts were frustrated by white colonists who refused to fund new schools. Following the Independence War, Algeria implemented a number of policies to reform and strengthen the educational structure. It was until 1963, that the Algerian government established the Ministry of Education.

At the end of this article, one can conclude that the origins of a national education in England helped in a way or another to what makes the British education system one of the most remarkable educational systems in the world. The development of education in England was fruitful for the welfare of the British community. Such development was related to many factors. The most important were: the early control of the Church, the rise of charity movements, and the change that was brought about by the Industrial Revolution and its impacts on education. These impacts pushed the State to think about a system of education

that went along with the new industrial system. As far as the other education systems are concerned, most of the countries were influenced directly or indirectly by the English educational experience. Finally, all the historical facts and events, in spite of being dramatic, participated in the development and welfare of the World education system.

### ■ Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Arthur James Balfour was born on July 25, 1848 in Whittingehame, East Lothian. In 1874, he was elected the Conservative Member of Parliament for Hertford. Four years later he became private secretary to Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, Lord Salisbury. He died on March 19, 1930. *Encyclopedia Britannica* 2008, Ultimate Reference Suite, the entry: [Arthur James Balfour](#)

<sup>2</sup> The 'Kenyon-Slaney clause was an amendment to A. J. Balfour's 1902 Education Bill. This was designed to placate nonconformist criticism of the bill by placing control of religious instruction in denominational schools under the managers as opposed to the trustees or individual clergymen. In November 1902 Kenyon-Slaney declined the offer of a baronetcy. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2008, *Ultimate Reference Suite*, the entry: [The 'Kenyon-Slaney clause'](#)

<sup>3</sup> The Cowper-Temple Clause was a clause inserted in the English Education Act of 1870, on an amendment by Cowper-Temple (afterwards Lord Mount-Temple) to exclude from all rate-built schools every catechism and formula distinctive of any denominational creed. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2008, *Ultimate Reference Suite*, the entry: [The Cowper-Temple Clause](#).

<sup>4</sup> Augustine Birrell was born on January 19, 1850. He was an English politician, barrister, academic and author. He was Chief Secretary for Ireland from 1907 to 1916, resigning in the immediate aftermath of the Easter Rising. He died on November 20, 1933. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2008, *Ultimate Reference Suite*, the entry: [Augustine Birrell](#).

<sup>5</sup> Reginald McKenna was born on July 6, 1863. He was a British banker and Liberal politician. He notably served as Home Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer during the premiership of H. H. Asquith. He died on September 6, 1943. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2008, *Ultimate Reference Suite*, the entry: [Reginald McKenna](#).

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