

Remarkable Growth Story of RNTU- A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This Case study explores the unique journey of Rabindranath Tagore University, referred to as RNTU, in contributing to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4) related to Education, that India has committed to attain by 2030. The study delves in to the strategies, initiatives and outcomes that have positioned RNTU as a front runner in the national pursuit of outcome based education despite tough challenges it faced being the first private university in the state of Madhya Pradesh (M.P.)

RNTU adopted an eleven faceted action plan to address various dimensions of challenges thrown by SDG-4. These eleven fronts comprised, **First** – risk of establishing a University in a village, to effectively address Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) issue. **Second** – Liberal financial support to students **Third** – Recruiting right faculty and their development, **Fourth** – Novel approach for skill delivery, **Fifth** – using extension activity as empowering tool, **Sixth** – Applying new concept for boosting research, **Seventh** – Producing job creators, **Eight** – Motivation for research writing and meaningful events, **Ninth** – Lively campus like gurukul with most modern infrastructure, information system and excellent documentation **Tenth** – Proactive National Education Policy-20 (NEP-20) implementation and **Eleventh** – Creating inter and intra discipline approach with a big component of arts, language and culture. These approaches paid rich dividends in terms of significant contribution in Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER), National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) ranking, Awards, record startups, visible development in adopted villages, excellent research outputs etc.

The Case Study shows that how RNTU's journey towards SDG 4, serves as a compelling example of how higher education institutions can drive social change and contribute to the global agenda of providing quality holistic education for everyone. The study showcases the importance of collaboration, research, innovation, and a relentless commitment to excellence in advancing the cause of quality education, ultimately helping to transform lives and build a more sustainable future in a developing country like India where over 60% student come from tier 2/3 cities/Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).

Keyword – SDG 4, RNTU, NEP-20, Growth Shiksha Mitra, Core Research and Innovation Group (CRIG).

I INTRODUCTION

1. Rabindranath Tagore University is the first private university of Madhya Pradesh established in 2010 as AISECT University later changed to the present name i.e. Rabindranath Tagore University (RNTU). The objective was to adopt the vision and philosophy, of Rabindranath Tagore the Nobel Laureate of India, as regard to creating an educational institution of world class on the lines of old gurukuls for quality, equity and inclusiveness in education. Incidentally United Nation adopted 17 goals for Sustainable Development in which Goal 4 is on similar line. India adopted these goals in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. SDG 4 aims to address various educational challenges and inequalities across the world. It includes several key components as under:

1.1 Access to Quality Education: The primary aim of SDG 4 is to ensure that everyone, regardless of age, gender, or background, has access to quality education at all levels. This encompasses early childhood education, primary and secondary education, vocational training, and higher education.

- 1.2 Inclusiveness:** The goal emphasizes inclusiveness, ensuring that marginalized and vulnerable populations, including children with disabilities, refugees, and those in conflict-affected areas, have equal opportunities to access education.
- 1.3 Equity:** SDG 4 seeks to reduce educational inequalities by addressing disparities in access to education and educational outcomes, both within and between countries.
- 1.4 Quality Learning Outcomes:** Quality education is not just about access but also about the quality of learning outcomes. The goal promotes the acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills that prepare individuals for future employment and active citizenship.
- 1.5 Lifelong Learning:** SDG 4 recognizes the importance of lifelong learning and encourages continuous education and skill development throughout a person's life.
- 1.6 Teacher Training:** It highlights the need for well-trained teachers and educators who can provide effective instruction and support for students.
- 1.7 Education Infrastructure:** The goal promotes investments in educational infrastructure, such as safe and inclusive schools, as well as the use of technology to enhance educational opportunities.
- 1.8 Global Citizenship:** SDG 4 aims to foster global citizenship by promoting values, cultural diversity, and sustainable development education.

2. SDG 4 is closely related to other sustainable development goals, as quality education is recognized as a fundamental enabler for achieving objectives related to poverty reduction, gender equality, economic growth, health, and more. It reflects the global commitment to addressing educational challenges and working towards a more equitable and educated global population. In adopting these goals RNTU became front runner as it made their objectives as part of their vision in 2010 itself.

II CHALLENGES OF ESTABLISHING A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTE IN RURAL AREA

3. RNTU was established in Village Mendua of Raisen District. This village has a population of 1320 families, where main source of livelihood is agriculture and literacy rate is around 67%. Being a rural feeder electric power supply suffered from frequent interruptions, village suffers from low average

Exhibit 1

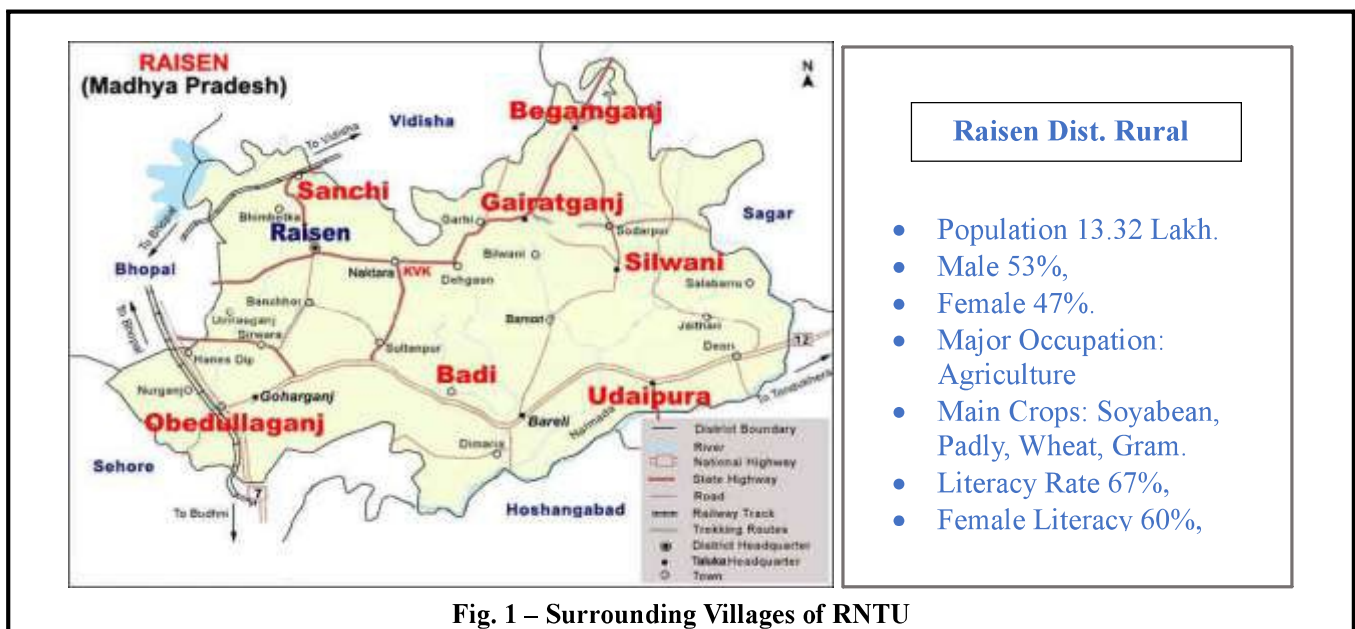


Fig. 1 – Surrounding Villages of RNTU

Source :- Agro Climatic Zone

income and literacy level. Despite all these challenges RNTU was established in this rural area which represents a deliberate commitment to bring quality education and development to less urbanized regions [Exhibit 1 (Fig. 1)], and how RNTU Converted challenge into an opportunity.

Here are some key points explaining why RNTU's location in a rural area is significant:

- 2.1 Access to Education:** Establishing a university in a rural area increased the access to higher education for students who might otherwise had limited options. It brought education closer to the doorstep of individuals in rural communities, reducing the need for them to travel to urban centers for quality education. This not only Mendua Village but all other surrounding villages.
- 2.2 Regional Development:** RNTU's presence contributes to the overall development of the rural area. It created employment opportunities, encouraged economic growth, and stimulated local businesses. The University became an anchor institution that now plays a pivotal role in community development. Four thousand students in the University has provided livelihood to many and improved the growth of this region.
- 2.3 Addressing Educational Disparities:** Rural areas often face disparities in educational opportunities compared to urban areas. By establishing a university, at Village Mendua, RNTU addresses these disparities and promotes more equitable access to quality education.
- 2.4 Enhancing Agricultural and Rural Studies:** RNTU's rural location can also be strategically beneficial for academic programs related to agriculture, rural development, and related fields. Agriculture Department of the University has established '**Kissan Gosthi**' which addressed to the problems of farmers. It provides a real-world laboratory for students to study and apply their knowledge to the specific challenges of rural life.
- 2.5 Research Opportunities:** Rural areas have offered unique research opportunities, such as the study of local ecosystems, agriculture, and rural development. RNTU has leveraged its location for research that is directly relevant to the needs of the rural community.
- 2.6 Community Engagement:** The University's presence encourages community engagement, where students and faculty can actively participate in local projects, social initiatives, and outreach programs. [Exhibit 2 (Table 1)].

Exhibit 2

Table 1 – Social Activities and Awareness Programmes in Villages

Activities Type /Years	Year 2019	Year 2020	Year 2021	Year 2022	Year 2023
Social Activitis	56	19	23	37	25
Education Camp	2	1	3	4	5
Awareness Programmes	25	27	32	34	39
Event of National Programmes	7	5	10	12	13
Health Camp	2	2	3	4	4

Source:- Record and Reports of National Service Scheme (NSS), Student Activities Council (SAC) and Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC),RNTU.

This engagement fosters a sense of social responsibility and encourages students to make meaningful contributions to the region. National Service Scheme (NSS) and Student Activity Council (SAC) hold regular activities in rural areas.

2.7 Cultural Preservation: Rural areas surrounding RNTU have rich cultural traditions. By being situated in a rural location, RNTU is playing a role in preserving and promoting local culture, heritage, and traditions, enriching the educational experience for students.

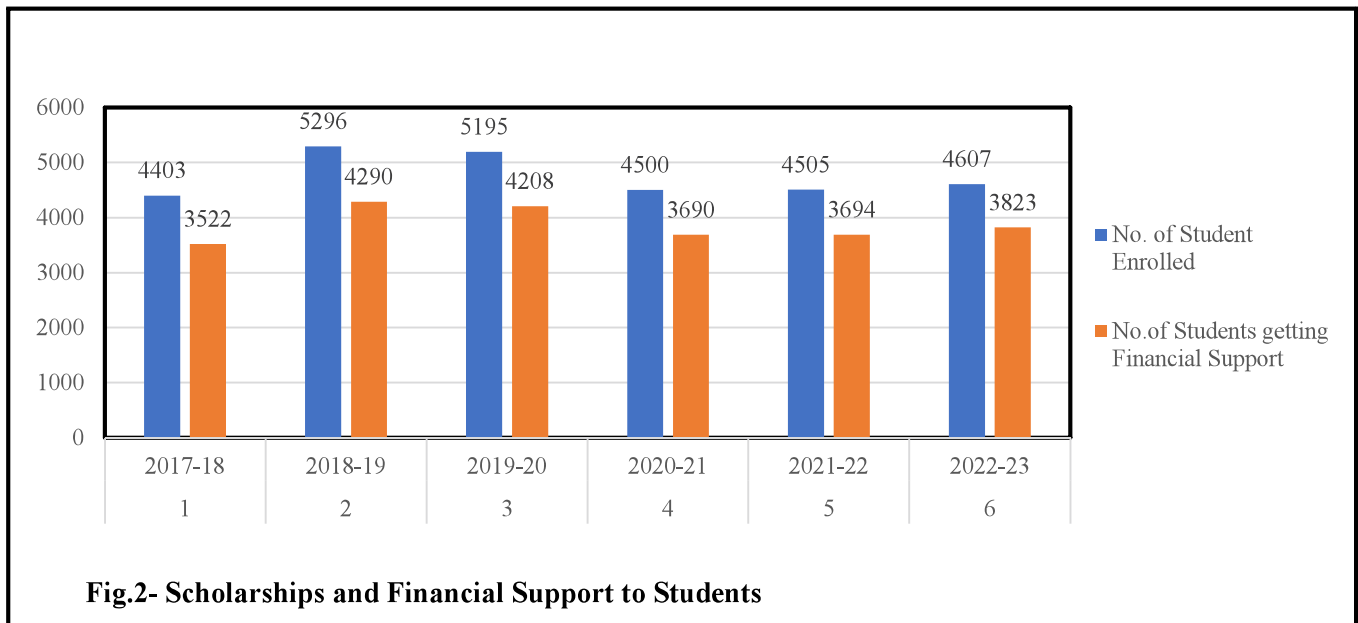
2.8 Environmental Awareness: RNTU's rural location also serves as a platform for promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices. It provides an opportunity for studying and implementing eco-friendly and sustainable solutions relevant to rural settings. Research students have taken up number of rural project for Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) research.

4. RNTU's establishment in a rural area was not only about bringing education to underserved regions but also about fostering holistic development, community engagement, and a deeper understanding of rural life and its challenges. It is an example of an educational institution that recognizes the value of being situated in a rural context and actively contributes to the betterment of both the institution and the surrounding community.

III SHIKSHA MITRA SCHOLARSHIP- Contribution to GER and MAKING QUALITY EDUCATION AFFORDABLE

5. The Shiksha Mitra Scholarship offered by RNTU is a commendable initiative aimed at promoting education and providing financial assistance to deserving students. This scholarship program underscores RNTU's commitment to make quality education accessible and affordable for a wider demographic of students.

Exhibit 3



Source :- Scholarship Record of RNTU and Scholarships Owned by MP Govt.

The name "**Shiksha Mitra**" itself implies a partnership in education, reflecting the University's willingness to support students on their educational journey. [Exhibit 3 Fig. 2] Key points regarding the Shiksha Mitra Scholarship at RNTU includes:

- 5.1 Eligibility Criteria:** The scholarship program has specific eligibility criteria, such as academic performance, financial need, or other qualifications. This ensures that the scholarships are awarded to students who truly benefit from the financial assistance.
- 5.2 Financial Support:** The scholarship program covers various expenses, including tuition fees, books, accommodation, and more. This financial support has significantly reduced the financial burden on students and their families.
- 5.3 Inclusivity:** The term "**Shiksha Mitra**" (Education Partner) suggests that RNTU views scholarship recipients as active partners in their educational journey. This promotes a sense of belonging and partnership within the RNTU community.
- 5.4 Impact on Accessibility:** By offering scholarships, RNTU enhanced the accessibility of education, enabling a broader and more diverse student body to pursue higher education.
- 5.5 Holistic Development:** Scholarships not only support academic pursuits but also promote overall development by reducing financial stress and allowing students to focus on their studies and personal growth.
- 5.6 Community Engagement:** Scholarship programs can encourage community engagement, as beneficiaries may be inspired to give back to their communities once they complete their education.
6. RNTU's Shiksha Mitra Scholarship is a powerful tool for promoting access to quality education, reducing financial barriers, and fostering a sense of partnership and inclusivity within the educational community. It exemplifies the institution's commitment to making a positive impact on society by investing in the education of deserving students.

IV TEACHERS OF RNTU- KEY TO WORLD CLASS QUALITY

7. Recruiting right individuals can bring several advantages to an educational institution. While recruiting the faculty RNTU goes beyond normal system and ensures a right mix of experienced and well qualified people from academia as well as industries and Corporate Sector [Exhibit 4 (Table 2)].

Exhibit 4

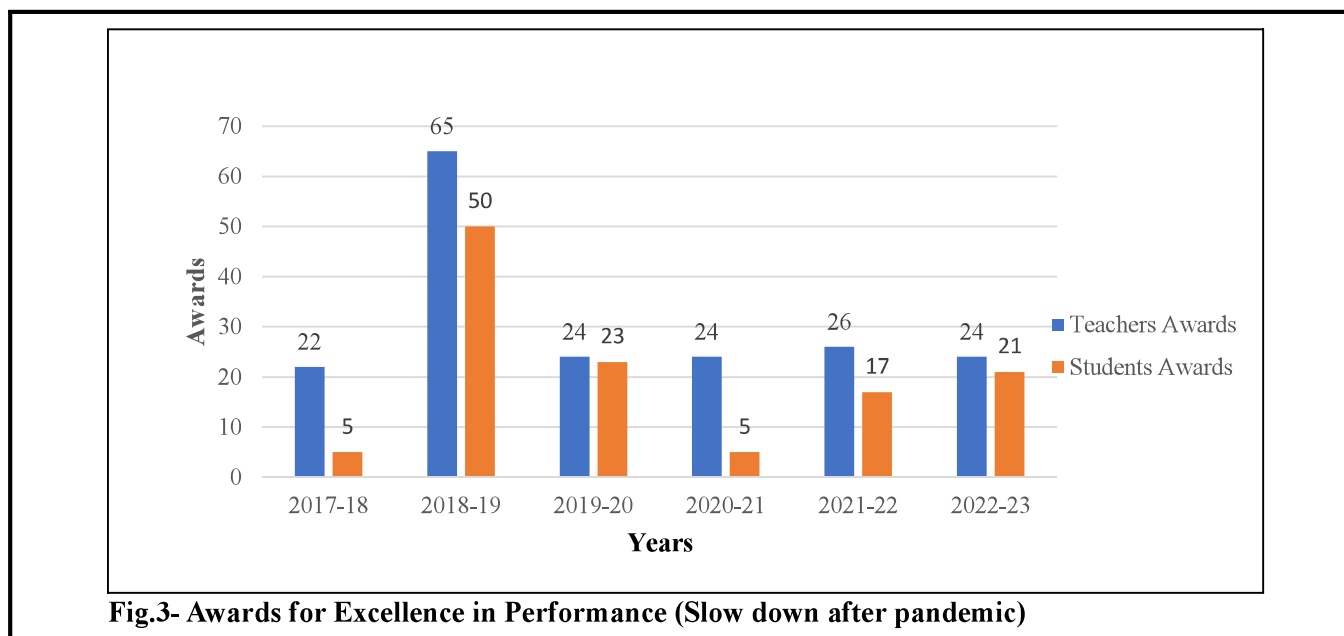
Table 2
Departmental Growth of RNTU

Year	No. of Departments	No. of Students	No. of Teachers	No. of Ph.D. Teachers	No. of Industry Experts	No. of Teachers Undergone FDP
2017-18	16	4403	274	79	10	201
2018-19	16	5296	295	137	11	270
2019-20	16	5195	305	149	13	190
2020-21	17	4500	290	212	15	191
2021-22	18	4505	289	212	15	191
2022-23	20	4607	295	212	15	215

Source :- Annual Reports of RNTU and IQAC, RNTU Research cell.

Here are some of the benefits associated with hiring such personnel:

- 7.1 Knowledge and Expertise:** Experienced individuals often come with a wealth of knowledge and expertise in their respective fields. This has enriched the academic environment and contributed to high-quality teaching, research, and academic leadership in RNTU. This has led to continuous growth in number of departments and faculty.
 - 7.2 Mentorship:** Experienced faculty and staff can serve as mentors to younger or less experienced colleagues and students. Their guidance has approved to be invaluable in helping others develop their skills and excel in their roles. An effective tutor guardian Scheme, Class Mentors System and Mutual Faculty Development Programme has paid rich dividends.
 - 7.3 Research and Innovation:** Experienced researchers can lead cutting-edge research projects provide research environment and enhance the institution's research profile, and contribute to innovation and intellectual growth.
 - 7.4 Quality Education:** Experienced and highly qualified educators can provide a high standard of teaching, drawing on their knowledge of effective pedagogical methods and a deep understanding of the subject matter.
 - 7.5 Leadership and Administration:** Experienced administrators can effectively manage academic departments, research centers, and other aspects of the institution, ensuring smooth operations and strategic planning.
 - 7.6 Industry Insights:** Hiring experienced individuals with industry experience can bridge the gap between academia and the job market. Their insights can help tailor academic programs to meet industry needs and prepare students for the workforce. RNTU has established excellent link with surrounding three industrial areas and many industry experts are in the Boards of Study in various departments.
 - 7.7 Continuous Improvement:** Experienced personnel from different fields often bring a culture of continuous improvement. They may have insights into best practices, quality assurance, and accreditation processes that can help the institution thrive. They have significantly contributed in many quality initiatives through Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) in RNTU.
 - 7.8 Stability and Reputation:** Hiring experienced and qualified individuals has certainly enhanced RNTU's. The presence of renowned faculty and staff has attracted students, funding, and partnerships, ultimately elevating the university's standing in the academic community.
 - 7.9 Inspiration and Role Modeling:** Experienced individuals can serve as inspirational figures, motivating students and junior faculty to strive for excellence in their academic and research pursuits. This can be easily experienced in RNTU Campus.
8. The number of awards faculty and students have won at national and international levels speak of the outcome of recruiting right kind of faculty members [Exhibit 5 (Fig. 3)].

Exhibit 5

Source :- Compiled by authors based on Record at various departments and IQAC-RNTU

While recruiting experienced individuals from different fields can bring many advantages, it's also essential to maintain a balance between experienced and junior faculty and staff. This diversity can create a dynamic and innovative environment where new ideas and fresh perspectives complement the wisdom and experience of senior professionals, ensuring the institution's ongoing success and growth.

V SKILL ACADEMIES – AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH

9. Establishing 20 plus Skill Academies and a Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendra (PMKK) within the campus of Rabindranath Tagore University (RNTU) were strategic moves. Much before Skill India initiative came, in 2012 itself RNTU made Skill Electives compulsory in higher education in all the disciplines. Each department offered some skill electives which was available across all the disciplines. Most of these were livelihood electives linked with established skill sectors by Government of India (GoI). A PMKK set up within the campus had lot of spare capacity which was used by the higher education. In addition, all the labs and workshop in the University were furnished with industry grade equipment and tools with participation from industry. This helped in providing hands on training to reduce skill gap.

9.1 Skill Development: Skill academies and PMKK provide students with opportunities to acquire practical skills that are highly valued in the job market. This aligns with RNTU's commitment to holistic education and equipping students with more than just theoretical knowledge.

9.2 Employability: By offering skill development programs and PMKK, RNTU enhances the employability of its graduates. Students can gain industry-relevant skills, making them more attractive to potential employers. The most important point is that skill training of non-Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Students has resulted in overall improvement in employability.

- 9.3 Industry Collaboration:** Skill academies and PMKK often involve collaborations with industry partners. These partnerships can result in internship opportunities, on-the-job training, and potential employment for students. RNTU collaborated with over 50 industries on a regular basis.
- 9.4 Real-World Application:** Hands-on skill development programs provide students with real-world experience, allowing them to apply their knowledge in practical scenarios.
- 9.5 Addressing Skills Gap:** Skill academies and PMKK can contribute to addressing the skills gap in the region by producing job-ready graduates with the skills needed by local industries.
- 9.6 Community Engagement:** These initiatives can also engage the local community by providing skill development opportunities to individuals beyond the student body, further contributing to the region's socio-economic development. Over 4K youths got benefited.
- 9.7 Diversification of Academic Programs:** Skill academies and PMKK diversified RNTU's academic offerings, making the institution more attractive to a broader range of students who seek both traditional education and skill development.
- 9.8 Government Initiatives:** Initiatives like PMKK are supported by government policies and could provide RNTU with additional resources and funding.
- 9.9 Competitive Advantage:** Skill development initiatives gave RNTU a competitive advantage in the education sector, differentiating it from other institutions.
- 9.10 Contribution to National Goals:** These initiatives aligned with national and international development goals, such as India's Skill India mission, which aims to enhance the skills of the country's workforce.
10. Establishing skill academies and a PMKK within the campus of RNTU proved to be proactive and innovative step that benefited students, the local community, and the institution itself. It reflects RNTU's commitment to holistic education and its proactive approach to addressing the evolving needs of the job market and society.

VI RESEARCH AND INNOVATION – LOOKING BEYOND

11. Establishing a Core Research and Innovation Group (CRIG) in the campus with an annual corpus of Rs 1 Crore is a substantial and noteworthy initiative to enhance research environment in the University. Based on the emerging technologies and trend RNTU chose 9 areas of interest and established 9 Centers of Research Excellence popularly called “**Navratn Centers**”. These areas were- Energy, Internet of Things (IoT) and Computing, Agriculture, Environment Engg, Science Communication, Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), Augmented Reality/ Virtual Reality (AR/VR), Data Science, Advanced Material and Nano Science and Social Entrepreneurship. These centers are called Navratn Centers have collaboration with various research labs in India and several relevant industries. Subsequently 10 research centers on arts, culture language sociology etc have been added and they are called ‘**Suptrishi**’. [Exhibit 6 (Table 3)]. Initially established 9 Centers of Research Excellence were mostly technical in nature. With its commitment to otherwise neglected filed of arts, culture, language, sociology etc. RNTU added 10 more centers of Research in these areas making it a total of 19 Research Centers contributing to a wide band of research fields. This initiative reflects a commitment to advancing research and innovation within the institution and has several significant implications:

- 11.1 Research Funding:** The corpus of Rs 1 Crore has provided substantial financial resources for research projects, enabling faculty and students to engage in in-depth and impactful research endeavors.

Exhibit – 6**Table 3 RNTU Centers of Research Excellence**

RNTU Research Centers	
Navratn Centers (Technology & Science)	Saptrishi Centers (Arts, Culture & Humanities)
• Center for Renewable Energy (CRE)	• Tagore International Center for Arts & Culture (TICAC)
• Agriculture Research Center (ARC)	• Bhasha Shikshan Kendra (BSK)
• Advanced Material Research Lab (AMRL)	• Anuvad Kendra (Translation & Foreign Language) (AK)
• Center for IoT & Advance Computing (CIAC)	• Pravasi Bhartiya Sahitya Evam Sanskriti Shodh Kendra (PBSSK)
•	•
• Center for Advanced Water & Environmental Research (CAWER)	• Sanskrit, Prachya Bhasha Evam Bhartiya Gyan Parampara Kendra (SPBB)
• Dr. C.V. Raman Center for Science Communication (CSC)	• Vanmali Srijan Peeth (VSP)
• Future Skills Academy	• Lok Bhasha evam Sanskriti Kendra
• Atal Incubation Center (AIC)	• Center for Women Entrepreneurship
• Center for Skill Dev & PMKK	• Santosh Choubey Center for Social Entrepreneurship
	• Livelihood Resource Center

Source – IQAC-RNTU Records

11.2 Research Centers: The establishment of nine research centers subsequently grown to 19 signifies a diverse and comprehensive approach to research. Each center could focus on specific areas of study, fostering interdisciplinary collaborations and specialization.

11.3 Cutting-Edge Research: With such financial backing and dedicated research centers, the University could pursue cutting-edge research that addresses real-world challenges and contributes to advancements in various fields. [Exhibit 6 (Table 3)] and [Exhibit 7 (Table 4)]

11.4 Knowledge Generation: The research conducted within CRIG has the potential to generate new knowledge, which could be disseminated through publications, patents, and innovative solutions. Research publications, patent and projects are testimony to this fact [Exhibit 8 Fig. 5]

11.5 Collaborations: The research centers could serve as hubs for collaboration with other institutions, industry partners, and government agencies, enhancing the institution's network and influence. RNTU has collaborated with over 50 organisations.

11.6 Industry Relevance: Research outcomes could be tailored to address industry needs, driving innovation and contributing to economic growth and development. 76 consultancy projects in last 5 years support this belief [Exhibit 7 Table 4]

Exhibit 7

Year	No. of Consultancy Projects	Research Projects	Total Amount
2017-18	11	2	2.1 Cr.
2018-19	12	3	2.4 Cr.
2019-20	15	15	2.7 Cr.
2020-21	8	9	1 Cr.
2021-22	15	13 +	1.6 Cr.
2022-23	15	15	2.7 Cr.
Total	76	47	12.4 Cr.

Source :- Annual Reports of RNTU and IQAC, RNTU Research

- 1.1 Contribution to Academia:** The research centers could contribute to the academic community by publishing in high-impact journals, participating in conferences, and sharing findings with the global research community. [Exhibit 11 Table -6]
- 1.2 Student Engagement:** Research opportunities within CRIG could engage students in meaningful projects, enriching their educational experience and fostering a culture of innovation and inquiry.
- 1.3 Promotion of SDGs:** The research conducted within CRIG could contribute to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges.
- 1.4 Strategic Investment:** The allocation of such a substantial corpus demonstrate the strategic vision of the RNTU in advancing research and innovation as a central pillar of its mission.

12. CRIG within the AISECT Group of Universities, with its significant financial resources and nineteen research centers, is poised to make a substantial impact on research, innovation, and academic excellence. This initiative positions the university as a hub for knowledge generation and solution-oriented research that can positively influence both academia and society at large. RNTU's Track record of last 5 years fully assures this.

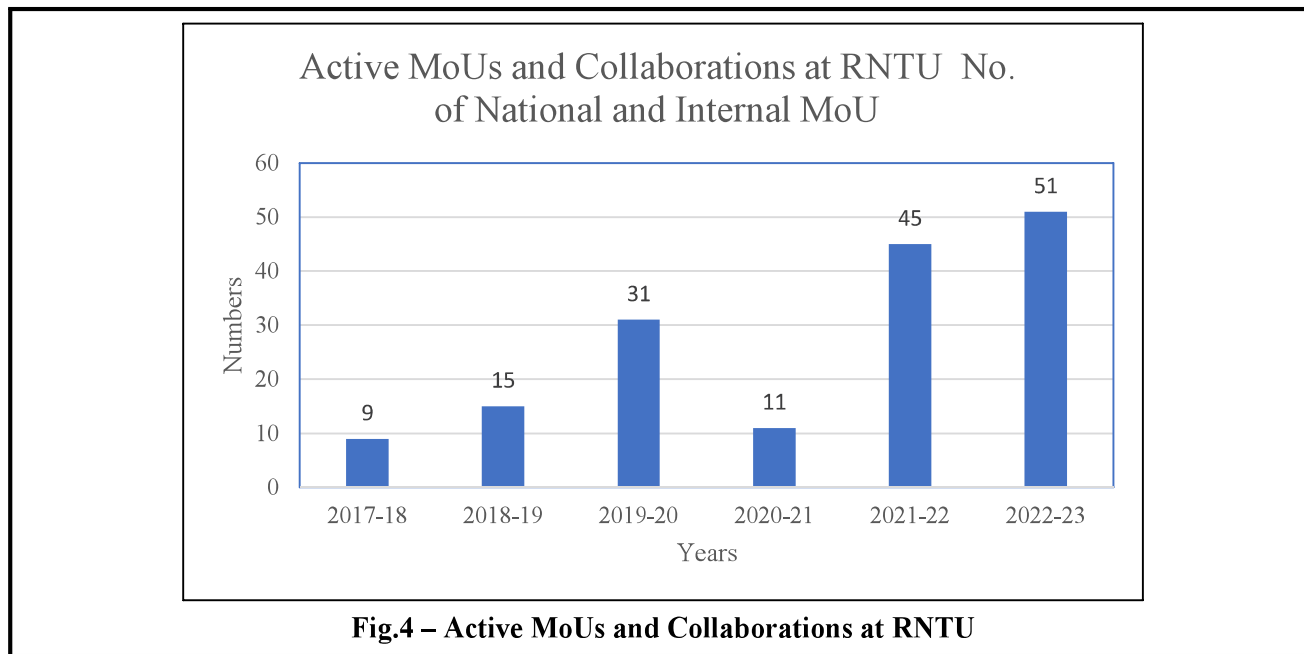
VII ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT

13. Rabindranath Tagore University (RNTU) offering training and support to entrepreneurship is a commendable initiative. This approach has paid in a big way and RNTU became the first Private University in central India which was awarded **Atal Incubation Center by Neeti Aayog GoI**. The charged atmosphere in the University had many positive implications: -
 - 13.1 Entrepreneurial Skills:** RNTU's training programs equipped students and aspiring entrepreneurs with essential entrepreneurial skills such as business planning, financial management, marketing, and leadership.
 - 13.2 Innovation and Creativity:** Entrepreneurship training supported encourages innovation and creativity, fostering an environment where students could develop and implement new ideas and solutions.

13.3 Business Incubation: RNTU at Incubation Center provided facilities and resources for business incubation, enabling start-ups to develop and grow within a supportive environment.

13.4 Industry Networking: Entrepreneurship programs facilitated networking opportunities with industry experts, potential investors, and mentors who could provide guidance and resources.

Exhibit 8



Source :- Compiled by the authors based on MoUs available in the University

13.5 Start-Up Funding: Atal Incubation at RNTU offered access to start-up funding, grants, or venture capital, helping students and entrepreneurs turn their ideas into viable businesses.

13.6 Practical Experience: Students gained practical experience in entrepreneurship, which was invaluable when starting and running their own businesses.

13.7 Economic Development: Encouraging entrepreneurship contributed to economic development by creating jobs, boosting local economies, and fostering innovation.

13.8 Research and Development: Entrepreneurship often involved research and development activities, which align with the university's research initiatives. Research facilities have come handy for this.

13.9 Community Engagement: RNTU's support for entrepreneurship was also extended to the local community, providing opportunities for community members to start and grow businesses.

13.10 Inclusivity and Diversity: Entrepreneurship programs was mostly inclusive and encouraged diversity, allowing individuals from various backgrounds to participate in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

14. RNTU's commitment to training and supporting entrepreneurship is an investment in the future of its students, the local community, and the broader economy. It empowered individuals to become job creators and innovators while aligning with global goals for economic growth and sustainability. 87 successful startups in last 5 years support this.

VIII SOCIAL CONNECT- MOST ESSENTIAL PART OF EDUCATION

15. Adopting five surrounding villages namely Village Mendua, Keerath Nagar, Chandlakhedi, Teelendi, Goklakundi is a laudable and impactful initiative by Rabindranath Tagore University (RNTU). This demonstrates the institution's commitment to community development and social responsibility. Here are some of the key benefits and implications of this initiative:
- 15.1 Community Development:** By adopting these villages, RNTU actively contributed to the development of the local community. This included initiatives related to education, healthcare, sanitation, infrastructure, and more.
 - 15.2 Access to Education:** RNTU extended its educational resources and expertise to these villages, potentially establishing programs or offering resources to improve educational outcomes for students in rural areas.
 - 15.3 Healthcare Services:** RNTU worked on healthcare initiatives, including medical camps, health awareness programs, and improving access to healthcare services for villagers. An OPD opened in RNTU has been of immense benefit to village people.
 - 15.4 Skill Development:** Skill development programs extended to these villages are empowering individuals with practical skills and enhancing their employability through PMKK.
 - 15.5 Economic Development:** RNTU's involvement can stimulate economic development in these villages by promoting entrepreneurship, agriculture, and local businesses.
 - 15.6 Environmental Initiatives:** The university has engaged in environmental awareness and conservation efforts in these villages, promoting sustainable practices.
 - 15.7 Social Inclusiveness:** RNTU's initiatives has been promoting inclusiveness by reaching out to marginalized communities and ensuring that the benefits of development are accessible to all.
 - 15.8 Research and Outreach:** RNTU's faculty and students have engaged in research projects that are directly relevant to the challenges and opportunities in these villages. This research has contributed to evidence-based solutions.
 - 15.9 Cultural Preservation:** RNTU is contributing in preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of these villages, enriching the cultural fabric of the region.
 - 15.10 Community Engagement:** The initiative fosters a strong sense of community engagement among RNTU's students, faculty, and staff, encouraging them to actively participate in projects that make a meaningful impact on society. 394 activities were done in these adopted villages [Exhibit -2 Table -1]
 - 15.11 Team work, Character Building and Sensitivity:** Working in rural area connects youth to the roots of our culture and promotes team spirit, sensitivity and character building.
16. Adopting five surrounding villages demonstrates RNTU's commitment to being a socially responsible institution. It not only enhances the well-being and development of these communities but also provides students with opportunities for experiential learning and community engagement. This initiative reflects RNTU's broader role in addressing societal challenges and contributing to the betterment of the region.

IX SIGNIFICANT MILE STONES OF UNIQUE RNTU'S JOURNEY

17. RNTU converted risks and challenges in to opportunities and went ahead to carve a niche for itself. Some notable milestones of its unique journey are-

17.1 Quality Acknowledgements: Right from its inception RNTU's main focus was on quality of education. Various initiatives taken as discussed in preceding paragraphs resulted in recognition at national and international platforms. It won '**Shiksha Ratn**' awards in 2011. Skill Excellence award of central government in 2013 and since then RNTU has continued winning awards at national and international level for excellence in academics, research, skill and innovation. 5 NIRF ranking 5 years in a row and Innovation Council of RNTU being amongst 9 institutes in central India to get four-star rating by the Ministry of Education GoI put RNTU in a class.

17.2 NIRF Ranking: For last 5 years RNTU has remained in the top 200 institutions in the country. In central India it became the only private university to achieve this distinction. [Exhibit -9 Table -5]

Exhibit 9

Table 5 RNTU NIRF Ranking and four-star rating for innovation

Year	Rank Band	Category
2019	151-200	Universities
2020	151-200	Overall
2020	151-200	Universities
2021	151-200	Overall
2022	101-150	Universities
2022	167	Engineering
2022	151-200	Universities
2023	151-200	Universities



Source :- Annual Reports of RNTU and IQAC, RNTU Research and UGC Reports

17.2.1 Awards Galore: Faculty and students have won record number of awards for their academic and research performance. Year after year RNTU has received awards for its outstanding performance in the field of education at national and international forums. [Exhibit 5 Fig. 3]

17.2.2 Initiatives in Arts Culture & Literature. RNTU received international recognition for spreading Hindi, Indian regional languages, arts and culture through '**Vishwa Rang**' annual international festival of arts and culture in over 50 countries all over the world every year.

17.3 Research Excellence: Research has many dimensions RNTU excelled in all dimensions.

17.3.1 Research Paper Publication: The faculty of RNTU have published record number of Research Papers in high impact research journals. In last five years it has published over 1500 research papers in world class journals.

17.3.2 Text Books and Edited Books: Publication of over 50 Text books and over 50 Edited books by the authors from RNTU became a record.

17.3.3 Research Events: Seminars, Conferences, Conclaves etc provide a synergic plat form to share, discuss and exchange research ideas and outcomes and develop a collaborative research culture. Right from regional events to international event like Conference on Water, Energy, Environment and Society where over 20 countries participate RNTU has set up a bench mark for research events in quantity and quality.

17.3.4 Research Projects & Consultancy: RNTU has been awarded externally funded 16 projects from Department of Science and Technology (DST), Defense Research & Development Organization (DRDO), Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), Madhya Pradesh Council of Science and Technology (MPCST) etc- during last 5 years 31 projects have been internally funded. There are 76 consultancy assignments in the field of agriculture environment, civil engineering, energy etc with RNTU. [Exhibit 7 Table 4]

17.4 Skill Initiatives: In central India, RNTU was the first to introduce compulsory skill electives as part of the curriculum across all the disciplines. Later NEP-20 also brought this a policy level. To make it effective RNTU established 15 skill academics and linked with skill sector offering over 30 skills.

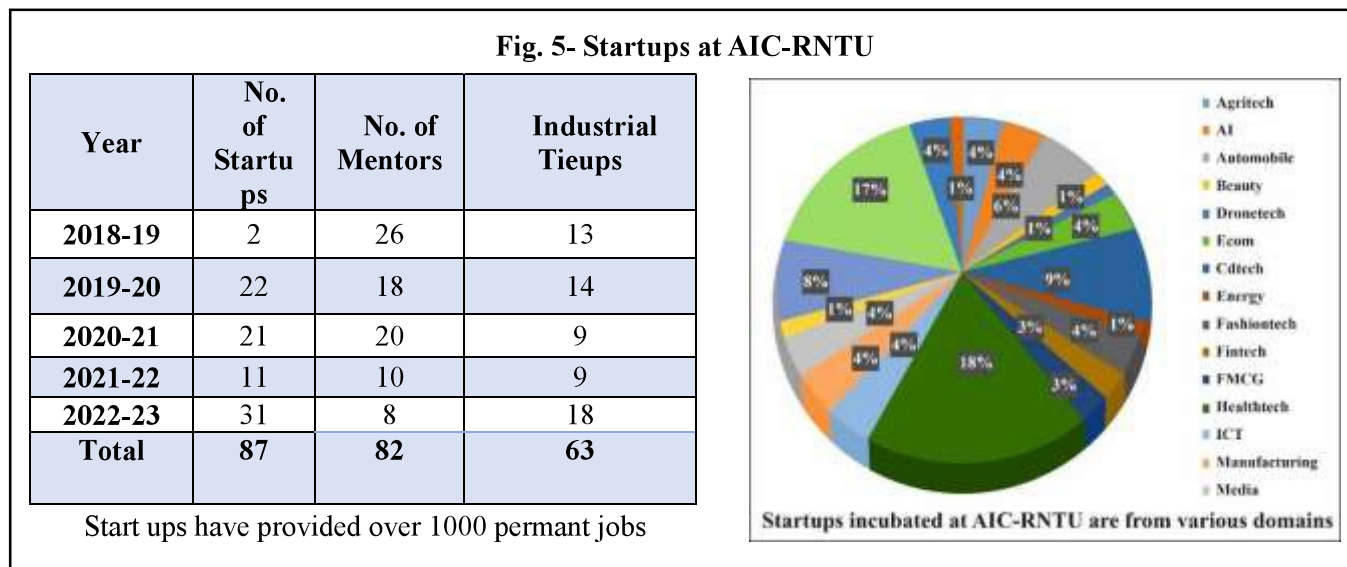
17.5 Holistic Development and Fitness for All: State of the Arts Sports facilities, modern gym, yoga initiatives and credits for sports has motivated all students and faculty to look after their physical fitness. As a result, students of RNTU have made international records in Climbing, Athletics, Wrestling, fencing, Judo, Cricket etc. [Exhibit 11 Table 6]

17.6 Technology and Infrastructure: Smart class rooms, smart labs and most modern computer lab, Library have brought in a total change in academic and research environment in RNTU.

17.7 Entrepreneurship – The New Age Mantra: Producing job creators also rather than only job seeker, has been the objective of RNTU. This dream started with establishment of Entrepreneurship Development (ED) Cell but it got the wings when based on the potential and capabilities Neeti Aayog GoI provided first Atal Incubation Center (AIC-RNTU). It has incubated over 100 ideas ending up in 87 successfully startups. [Exhibit 10 Fig. 5]

17.7.1 Successful 80 + Startups: AIC-RNTU has been able to provide 87 startups which are employing a workforce of over thousand people. There are number of startups in the area of social services and welfare activities.

Exhibit 10



Source: - Records from AIC-RNTU

17.7.2 Mentors and Industry Support: There are over 80 mentors from industry and corporate world registered in AIC-RNTU. RNTU has a strong Industry- Academia interface. This has provided a very strong support system for successful startups.

17.7.3 Motivation through All India Competition: In collaboration with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), RNTU organizes competition for startups ideas at national level since last 5 years which has motivated several students at school and college level.

17.8 Core Research & Innovation Group (CRIG): This is the most unique initiative of RNTU. Normally for a private university it is difficult to get government research funding. RNTU established an annual corpus of Rs. 1 Crore and created an apex body CRIG to look after research and innovation in the University.

17.8.1 Internally Funded Projects: CRIG has supported 31 projects in last 5 years' time in RNTU.

17.8.2 Multidisciplinary Approach: CRIG has encouraged team spirit and multidisciplinary approach in research with the result faculty members are doing now multidisciplinary projects for which CRIG is allocating the fund.

17.9 Flagship Research Events: In addition to several events like seminar, workshops, conferences, competitions, demonstrations and guest lectures there are two annual research events where research is celebrated like a festival.

17.9.1 Vishwa Rang : This is a unique annual event where over 50 countries participate. This 10 days long festival is of arts, culture, literature, paintings, dramatics and all form of performing arts. This is biggest such festival in Asia held both online and offline in which over 500 renowned artists, writers, painters take part. It has been highly appreciated by President, Prime Minister and other VIPs.

17.9.2 Shodh Shikhar : This festival is complimentary to Vishwa Rang. Research Projects, Research Papers and Posters are presented by scholars, Scientist, students, faculty and people from industry at all India level with over 1K participants.

17.9.3 International Research Event: Annually on Energy, Water Environment, Emerging Technology and Society an International Research Conference is organized and proceedings published.

X IMPACT OF RNTU INITIATIVES

18. The initiatives taken by Rabindranath Tagore University (RNTU) have had a significant impact on various aspects of the institution and the communities it serves. Here's a summary of the impact of these initiatives:

18.1 Bench Mark of Overall Performance

Quality has been the core issue for RNTU since its inception. It took 11 front action plan and provided men, material and equipment resources of world quality.

- **Impact:** Being only private university in central India to get NIRF ranking for 5 years in a row, being first to get Atal Incubation Center from GoI, being first to introduce skills in course curriculum and being first to set up 19 research centers, RNTU has set a very higher Bench Mark for others to follow.

18.2 Research Excellence:

Establishment of Core Research and Innovation Group (CRIG) with a corpus of Rs. 1 Crore, 19 Centers of Research with state of the art facilities, Institute of Training Development & Policy Research (ITDPR) Institution's Innovation Council (IIC-RNTU) and introduction of attractive motivational schemes proved to be a game changer for RNTU and created an environment of research and innovation in the University.

- **Impact:** Increased research output in high-impact journals reflects RNTU's growing influence in the academic and research community. It positions the university as a hub for cutting-edge research. Two peer review biannual journals '**Anusandhan**' and '**Shodhaytan**' published by RNTU have published over 500 research papers from researchers world over. RNTU faculty have published over 1000 research papers in various world class journals. They have published over 50 text books and equal amount of edited books. There are projects from DST, DRDO, MNRE, ICAR etc, over 30 projects internally funded have helped in boosting research. RNTU's Innovation Council has been provided 4* rating by Ministry of Education and for its research outcome RNTU is in NIRF ranking. In last five years the university has done over 76 projects of Consultancy and 47 Research Projects from various industries, DRDO, DST, MNRE, MPCST, BDB, ICAR, etc.

Exhibit 11

Number of Research Activities Numbers and Funding Agencies	
• DST	4 Research Projects
• DRDO	2 Research Projects
• ICSSR	1 Research Project
• IIFM	1 Research Project
• MP Govt	4 Research Projects
• MPCST	4 Research Projects
• CRIG	31 Research Projects
• International Research Conference in 5 years	20 + * International Conferences on Water, Energy, Environment & Society (20 Countries) * Vishwarang International Conference on Arts & Culture (50 + countries)
• National and Regional Academic event in last 5 years	250 +
• Research Papers Published in last 5 years	1500 + (600 in Scopus and equivalent)
• Patents	70 + [Patents related to current national concerns]
• Books Published (Text Book)	52 + (Edited Books – 56)

Source- compiled by authors from Records and Reports at CRIG, IQAC and Department and News Media

18.3 Interdisciplinary Collaboration:

Multidisciplinary approach was embedded in the RNTU curriculum from its inception, Arts, Culture, language were made part of professional curriculum and similarly Professional Skills were made part of Arts and Humanities curriculum.

- **Impact:** Collaborations across disciplines has resulted in innovative solutions to complex problems and a more comprehensive educational experience for students. All the internally funded and some of externally funded projects are multidisciplinary in nature. Multidisciplinary approach applied in research and consultancy has improved quality of outputs in 76 consultancy project 16 externally funded research project and 31 internally funded research projects done by RNTU in last five years, RNTU has created a niche for itself in efficient project management and research activities.

18.4 Inclusiveness and Community Engagement:

Adopting 5 villages was the beginning of the initiative. Health campus, Awareness Programmes, Education drive, Sports and Skill Coaching camp for village youth '**Kissan Gosthi**' for farmers and '**Legal Aid Clinic**' and OPD for villagers have been some of the strong initiatives of RNTU for inclusiveness and community engagement.

- **Impact:** RNTU's community engagement initiatives have not only benefited local communities but also fostered a culture of social responsibility among students and faculty. This can be seen in all the villages adopted by University where a general improvement in all dimensions are visible. In last 5 years' students organized 394 activities in these villages. Extension activities conducted in 5 adopted villages during last 5 years has brought sea change on both sides. It has not only exposed the rural population to health awareness, govt programmes, importance of cleanliness and hygiene but also the University threw open many facilities including skill programmes through '**Kisan Gosthi**', '**Kisan Mela**' and '**Coaching Camp for Village Youths**'. On the other side it brought significant behavioral changes in students.

18.5 Scholarships and Financial Aid:

RNTU provides quality education at very low fees. Almost over 80% of the students are provided significant subsidy, concession and scholarship making quality education affordable to rural population.

- **Impact:** Scholarships and financial aid has made education more accessible, ensuring that a broader demographic of students can pursue higher education and improve their future prospects. This has showed a direct impact on GER.

18.6 Skill Development Programs:

Establishment of PMKK within the campus and setting up over 30 Skill Academies proved key initiative for skill development in higher education.

- **Impact:** Skill development programs have enhanced participants' employability, addressing the demand for practical skills in the job market. A genial improvement in placement can be attributed to this initiative.

18.7 Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support:

There were five major initiatives taken by RNTU. First Entrepreneurship Development Course in the curriculum across all discipline. Second establishing a vibrant Innovation Council. Third, establishment of Atal Incubation Center by GoI with excellent facilities, Fourth collaboration with large number of industries. Fifth, incentives for entrepreneurship.

- **Impact:** Incubating over 80 start-up ventures have contributed to economic development, job creation, and innovation, while offering students opportunities for real-world application of their knowledge. Over 80 plus startups have created 100 plus entrepreneurs and over 500 new jobs.

18.8 Green Initiatives

In addition to inherent locational advantage of green hills in front and back of the University RNTU has taken number of innovative measures. In the campus transportation is on solar carts, developed in house by the University. Electric power is supplied by solar resources designed by Energy Research Center of the University Water harvesting system of the university designed by center for Water Environment aims, for zero wastage. Waste disposal is converted to energy for the University kitchen. Plantation drives have made the campus green and picturesque.

- **Impact:** RNTU is amongst 18 campus in India chosen as green campus by MNRE, GoI. Initiatives have brought green discipline is faculty and students. The campus is litter free. With self-motivation the University is moving towards cashless and paperless campus. On their own students and faculty have taken up some internally funded projects to enhance green initiatives, to reduce carbon production. These initiatives have not only brought a green change in 5K students and 500 staff but has changed outlook of 5K families.

18.9 NEP-20 Implementation

RNTU did not wait for govt initiatives for implementing NEP-20. Incidentally some of the, directives in NEP-20 like skills, extension activities, outcome based curriculum with continuous evaluation system and holistic development were already part of academic system in RNTU much before NEP-20 came. RNTU took proactive measures, formed a task force and most of the provisions of NEP-20 were implemented by RNTU. A nicely designed Information and Monitoring System, 38 Policy documents, Manuals and Procedure Guides large number of formal committee/bodies and automated feedback not only add to the quality of academic administration but also has made NEP alignment easier for RNTU.

- **Impact:** There is a visible change in the quality of pass outs as reported in the feedback by employers and guardians of the students. Research outputs have increased and multidisciplinary approach has brought spirit –de-corps.

18.10 Festivities, Arts Culture and Sports:

RNTU, from it's inception was strong supporter of holistic development approach for its faculty and students. It is the only University which has a huge Tagore International Center for Arts and Culture promoting languages, dramatics, Cultural activities. A modern School of Drama provide UG and PG level formal education in dramatics, cinematic arts and creative writing works on same line as National School of Drama. There are two big flagship annual events at international level '**Shodh Shikhar**' is annual research festival in which from school to universities and industries to research organisations participate in Project Displays Competition and Research Paper Presentation Competition. '**Vishwa Rang**' is annual festival of Arts Culture Language, Literature Painting Music and Dramatics in which over 50 countries participate. In addition to above there are almost over 50 cultural and 50 academic/research events every year keep festive energy alive. World class facilities for sports and motivation for sports provide cutting edge to holistic development.

- **Impact:** With '**Vishwa Rang**', RNTU has become the real ambassador for Hindi, Indian Arts & Culture in whole world. '**Shodh Shikhar**' has boosted culture of innovation, research and project culture amongst youth. Sports facilities and motivation has produced international and national sports stars in RNTU. This has improved general awareness amongst faculty and students towards fitness and need for holistic development.

Exhibit 12**Table 7 RNTU Major Sports Achievements**

Sporting Stars RNTU Sports Academies	
• Megha Parmar	First woman from MP to reach summit of Mt. Everest
• Nandini Vats	Gold Medal Judo Commonwealth games
• Priyadarshi Prajapati	Gold Medal Wrestling All India University Champion
• Himanshi	Gold Medal Judo Khelo India Champion
• Manisha	Silver Medal Athletics All India University Games
• Anjana Yadav	First woman from MP to climb Mount Elbrus
• Team RNTU	Fencing – All India Bronze
• Team RNTU	Volley ball West Zone champion
• Team RNTU	Women Hockey West Zone champion
• Team RNTU	Cricket MP Regional Champion
Over 100 Medals in Regional, National and International Events	

Source – Record of Sports Dept RNTU and News Media

18.11 Global Collaboration

RNTU has over 100 ongoing collaborations within India and abroad through MoUs, agreement and Research/Academic joint projects, enhancing exposure and outlook of faculty and students

- **Impact:** Partnerships with international universities have enriched the academic experience, providing students with global exposure and broadening their horizons. Faculty and students have visited to Romania, USA, UK, Germany, Italy etc under the collaboration.

18.12 Modern Infrastructure:

Impact: Upgraded infrastructure, Modern Labs, Huge Library, Future Skill Academies, Research Resources, Modern Audio Visual Studio etc have enhanced the learning environment, making it more conducive to academic and research activities which is clear from feedbacks of students and parents.

19. In conclusion, these initiatives collectively position RNTU as a hub for quality education and research while fostering inclusiveness, accessibility, and community engagement. During the period under examination RNTU saw the most dreaded time of Covid which adversely affected performance of all other HEIs, but RNTU showed its consistency and quick recovery. Rich work culture and loyalty of the staff become drive-up force to make renewed efforts. The impact of these efforts extends beyond the university, positively affecting local communities, the employability of students, and the broader academic landscape. RNTU's commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 4 is evident through these initiatives and their tangible, positive effects on higher education sector and society by large.