



SUCCESS STORY

New Information and Communication Technology Books Bring Opportunities for Uzbekistan's Youth



Oybek Kurbanov with new ICT Student Textbook Photo: H. Sharahmedov, RTI International, November 2021.

"I think knowledge of ICT is important in every area of life and in every occupation. With this precious knowledge, my students will be ready for their future lives better than ever."

—Oybek Kurbanov, ICT Teacher

Oybek Kurbanov is a teacher of Physics and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) at School № 18, in Uzbekistan's Sirdaryo Region. Over his 26 years of teaching, Mr. Kurbanov has seen different levels of student interest and ability in ICT. Most students are very curious about computers and the internet. However, most do not have computers in their homes, and therefore, schools have an important role in equipping students with 21st century skills. Mr. Kurbanov believes that when learning ICT, practicing for just a few hours is insufficient; for real progress, students need ample practice opportunities and high-quality teaching and learning materials in a language they understand.

Mr. Kurbanov was delighted to be selected to pilot the new ICT student textbooks and teacher guides introduced by Uzbekistan's Ministry of Public Education in partnership with the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Uzbekistan Education for Excellence Program. The Program supports the Government of Uzbekistan's educational reforms by providing technical assistance in developing new teaching and learning materials and enhancing teacher professional development. As part of these efforts, the Program trained Mr. Kurbanov as a master trainer, and he joined the team of such trainers responsible for training teachers to use the new ICT materials in grades 5–11 in the 2021–2022 school year.

As a master trainer, Mr. Kurbanov realized that improving the quality of ICT teaching in Uzbekistan was critical to achieve student learning. He believed that the new teaching methods and materials would help shift teaching from theory to practice. His commitment supported his willingness to train and support other teachers.

Mr. Kurbanov acknowledges that shifting teacher practices will take time. For example, teachers initially found using a teacher guide to prepare their lessons difficult. Because the content and the methods were new to them, preparing for each lesson took extra time and energy. Previously, it was unusual for teachers to have students work on practical project-based assignments during class time.

By piloting the new materials himself, Mr. Kurbanov had the opportunity to observe his students' interest and practical skills increase. As a result, he believes the new methods will have an enormous impact on students' learning. The new textbooks include a helpful glossary of ICT terms in Uzbek, which is helping to standardize ICT vocabulary. Furthermore, the new textbooks cover important information on the internet, information security, the use of social media, and copyrights. In addition to understanding how to use their emerging ICT skills safely, Mr. Kurbanov also noted that, in just one school year, his students became encouraged to do their own research, make decisions, and use information correctly.

“It was unusual for teachers to focus on practical project – based assignments in the class rather than giving students homework.”

—Oybek Kurbanov, ICT
Teacher

There have been some other challenges as well. For example, students must search for information in earlier grades’ textbooks to complete their assignments. However, school libraries include textbooks for all grades, which students may use for reference.

Even in light of the challenges, Mr. Kurbanov highlights the importance of ICT as a subject: *“I think knowledge of ICT is important in every area of life and in every occupation. With this precious knowledge, my students will be ready for their future lives better than ever.”*

With the national rollout of the new materials planned for the 2022–2023 school year, Uzbek-speaking students across Uzbekistan will soon receive the new books. Mr. Kurbanov is excited about continuing to use the new ICT materials with his students as he feels that he can make an even greater contribution to the prosperity of future generations.

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