



Innovation Training Module

Prioritization Techniques

Choosing the Best Idea with Logic

Innovation often begins with many ideas. Students may brainstorm several possible solutions to a problem—ways to save water in school, reduce plastic waste, or improve transportation. However, in real life, not every idea can be implemented. Time, resources, and effort are limited. This is where **prioritization** becomes important.

Prioritization is the process of deciding **which ideas, tasks, or solutions should be addressed first** based on their importance and impact.

Scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, and policymakers use prioritization techniques to focus their energy on the most effective solutions. Teaching students this skill helps them think more logically and make better decisions when solving real-world problems.

For teachers, prioritization techniques are also powerful classroom tools. They help students organize their thinking, work collaboratively, and learn how to evaluate ideas systematically rather than randomly choosing an option.

Why Prioritization Matters

When students brainstorm ideas, they often generate many possibilities. While this creativity is valuable, students may struggle to decide **which idea is the best one to pursue.**

Prioritization helps students:

- Focus on ideas that create the greatest impact
- Understand the trade-offs between different choices
- Learn how to make evidence-based decisions
- Work collaboratively to evaluate options

Technique 1: Simple Ranking

The simplest way to prioritize ideas is **ranking.**

Students list their ideas and arrange them from **most useful to least useful** based on discussion and reasoning.

Example

If students brainstorm ways to reduce plastic waste in school, they might list:

- Installing water refill stations
- Encouraging reusable lunch boxes
- Organizing plastic collection drives
- Reducing plastic packaging in the school canteen
- Awareness posters

Students then discuss which ideas would have the **greatest impact** and rank them accordingly.

Classroom Activity

Step 1: Divide the class into small groups.

Step 2: Ask each group to brainstorm **five solutions to reduce food waste in the school canteen.**

Step 3: Ask students to rank their ideas from **1 (most effective) to 5 (least effective).**

Step 4: Each group explains why they ranked their top idea first.

This activity encourages **discussion, reasoning, and justification of choices.**

Technique 2: Dot Voting

Dot voting is a quick and engaging prioritization method that works very well in classrooms.

Each student is given a few votes (or “dots”) and places them next to the ideas they think are most promising.

How It Works

1. Write all ideas on the board.
2. Give each student **three votes.**
3. Students place their votes next to the ideas they prefer.
4. Count the votes and identify the **top ideas.**

This method ensures that **every student participates in the decision-making process.**

Classroom Activity

Ask students to brainstorm **ways to make their classroom more environmentally friendly.**

Examples may include:

- Switching off lights when not needed
- Using recycled paper
- Planting indoor plants
- Reducing paper usage
- Setting up waste segregation bins

Write all ideas on the board and conduct **dot voting.** The top two or three ideas can then be explored further.

Teachers often find this technique useful because it is **fast, democratic, and easy to implement**.

Technique 3: Impact vs Effort Matrix

One of the most widely used prioritization tools in innovation and project management is the **Impact vs Effort Matrix**.

This tool helps students evaluate ideas based on two questions:

- **Impact:** How much positive change will this idea create?
- **Effort:** How difficult will it be to implement?

Teachers can draw a simple **four-quadrant grid** on the board.

	Low Effort	High Effort
High Impact	Best Ideas	Long-Term Projects
Low Impact	Quick Tasks	Avoid

How to Use It in Class

Students place their ideas into one of the four boxes.

Ideas with **high impact and low effort** are usually the best starting points.

Example

Suppose students are exploring ways to **save electricity in school**.

Ideas may include:

- Turning off fans and lights when leaving a room
- Replacing bulbs with LED lights
- Installing solar panels
- Awareness posters about electricity use

Students may place them in the matrix like this:

- **High Impact, Low Effort:** Turning off lights and fans
- **High Impact, High Effort:** Installing solar panels
- **Low Impact, Low Effort:** Posters

This helps students understand that some ideas are **easy to implement but may not create large impact**, while others may require **more resources but offer bigger benefits**.

Technique 4: The 80/20 Principle (Pareto Principle)

Another useful concept in prioritization is the Pareto Principle, also known as the 80/20 rule.

For example:

- 20% of solutions may solve **80% of the problem**
- A few key ideas may have the **largest impact**

Teaching this concept encourages students to focus on **the most influential solutions rather than many small ones**.

Classroom Discussion

Ask students:

"If you could only choose **two ideas** to improve waste management in school, which ones would make the biggest difference?"

Students quickly learn that **prioritization is about focusing on the most meaningful actions**.

Connecting Prioritization to Decision Matrix Analysis

Prioritization techniques help students **narrow down many ideas into a few strong options**.

Once the top ideas are identified, students can move to a more structured tool such as **Decision Matrix Analysis**.

A decision matrix allows students to compare options based on clear criteria such as:

- Cost
- Feasibility
- Environmental impact
- Time required
- Long-term benefits

This process helps students move from **creative thinking to analytical decision-making**.

Teacher's Quick Classroom Guide

Teachers can use the following simple structure during innovation activities:

Step 1: Define the Problem

Example: How can our school reduce plastic waste?

Step 2: Brainstorm Ideas

Students generate multiple possible solutions.

Step 3: Prioritize Ideas

Use one of the following tools:

- Ranking
- Dot voting
- Impact vs Effort matrix

Step 4: Select Top Ideas

Choose the best 2–3 ideas.

Step 5: Evaluate Using Decision Matrix

Compare options logically and choose the final solution.

This process helps teachers **structure problem-solving activities without needing complex preparation**.

Reflection Questions for Students

Teachers may end the activity with a short reflection:

- Which idea did your group choose and why?
- Which idea had the highest impact?
- Which idea was easiest to implement?
- Did different groups prioritize different solutions? Why?

These questions encourage **critical thinking and deeper understanding**.

Conclusion

Prioritization is a key skill in innovation and decision-making. It helps students move from **many ideas to meaningful action**.

By using simple techniques such as **ranking, dot voting, the Impact vs Effort matrix, and the Pareto Principle**, teachers can guide students to evaluate ideas logically and collaboratively.

More importantly, these techniques show students that **good decisions are rarely random—they are made by carefully weighing options and focusing on what matters most**.

With these tools, classrooms can become spaces where students not only generate creative ideas but also learn how to **choose the best path forward**.

Riddles 2601

1. I'm a type of bond, but I'm not between people. What am I?
2. I grow in the dark, yet I can bloom without the sun. What am I?

(Answers on Back Cover Inside)