

# **Optimise the training outcomes of Indigenous prisoners through the valid, reliable, culture-fair assessment of their training potential with the Q Test**

**ACEA - Reintegration Puzzle Conference 2009**

**Day 1 Reintegration Stream – 3:30pm, Aug 31 2009**

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# Overview

- INTRODUCTION – WHY ASSESS?
- INDIGENOUS ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS
- Q TEST BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT
- THE Q TEST: LANGUAGE-FREE, CULTURE-FAIR ASSESSMENT
- INDUSTRY-BASED Q TEST INTRODUCTION
- THE Q TEST AT ROEBOURNE REGIONAL PRISON
- CONCLUSION



# Introduction

As educationalists in correctional facilities, your assessment and selection of prisoners (candidates) into appropriate training and post-release employment pathways is critical.

- Limited availability of training places and post-release employment opportunities
- Training and placement - a significant investment for a range of stakeholders
- Assessment of trainees needs to be valid and reliable



## **Introduction...cont.**

When the assessor and the candidate have different backgrounds, the risk of selection error increases.

All assessments should be culturally appropriate.

If language barriers exist, language appropriate or language-free delivery is vital.



# Indigenous Assessment Considerations

When assessing indigenous candidates, we must:

- Assure the key stakeholders (relevant authorities, the training provider, the prospective employers and the candidates themselves) that the assessment is fair and unbiased
- Provide the training providers and prospective employers with an accurate predictive tool



# Indigenous Considerations ...cont

- ‘Western’ language-based tests - unsuccessful with Indigenous candidates due to inherent language and cultural bias
- Invalid and unreliable processes can lead to:
  - candidates being placed into inappropriate training and employment pathways
  - costly processes with poor outcomes for the funding body
  - negative impact on process acceptance by relevant stakeholders



# Indigenous Considerations ...cont

- Invalid and unreliable processes can also lead to:
  - poor retention and trainee results due to dissatisfaction of their training programs or prospects - at both ends of the scale
  - resistance to assessment processes and resulting recommendations
  - resistance of line managers to embrace Indigenous prisoner candidates in their work teams due to previously unsuccessful placements
  - inherent dangers of having unsuitable employees in high risk environments

# Q Test Background and Development

- The Q Test - A highly specialised assessment tool - has the potential of overcoming many of these problems for indigenous candidates
- Precursor to Q Test - Pacific Island Regiment (PIR) Test
  - To assist Australian Army with the selection of locals recruits into the PIR in New Guinea in the 1950's based on their capacity to be trained
  - Recruitment policy - from all areas; 20% failure rate at initial training
  - Very costly process and significant negative social impact

# Background and Development....cont.

- PIR Test - made up from variety of assessment processes (McElwain and Griffith)
  - The introduction of the PIR Test – Failure rate dropped from 20% to 2%
- Queensland Test - Further refinements and validation with Indigenous Australians in 1960s (Kearney)
- Q Test - More recent refinements and validations with Indigenous groups throughout Australia and Asia (Kearney and ValueEdge)



# Background and Development....cont.

- Initial validation procedures were conducted with:
  - Indigenous Australians, New Zealand Maori, Fijians, Gilbert and Ellice Islanders, Filipinos and Australians of European descent
- Research applications:
  - Learning styles of Indigenous school students in WA
  - Indigenous youth entering the QLD Juvenile Justice System to assist with sentencing, training and reintegration
- Recent industry validations have been conducted with:
  - Indigenous Australians, Indonesian and Laotian



# Q Test - Language-Free Culture-Fair Assessment

- Q Test – Provides an insight into a candidate's training potential or 'trainability'
- Enables establishment of training pathways based on a capacity to cope with available training programs and employment opportunities.

*NB: Q Test measures potential, not achievement (as is measured by literacy and numeracy tests)*

# Q Test Assessment....cont.

- Individually administered for approx 1 hour
- Consists of six sub-tests:
  - Subtest 1: Sequential Memory
  - Subtest 2: Visual Memory
  - Subtest 3: Planning
  - Subtest 4: Abstract Manipulation
  - Subtest 5: Pattern Matching
  - Subtest 6: Design Sequencing
- Each subtest involves tasks where the candidates are required to construct or manipulate items, or recall patterns, shapes or sequences

## Q Test Assessment....cont.

- Each sub-test consists of items of increasing difficulty
- The assessor administering the test must be a skilled assessor
- The test does not rely on formal education or the need to complete items quickly (NB: generous time limits do apply to establish a suitable time for discontinuation and before frustration or anxiety)

# Industry-Based Q Test Introduction

- Freeport mine in West Papua - Testing for local Indigenous candidates from communities - since 2002
- Indigenous assessment prior to Q Test included language-based tests – did not provide valid selection predictions; tests considered “unfair”; company concerns of accuracy
- Q Test trial in 2004 with current indigenous employees
- High correlation between performance and Q Test results
- Q Test implemented, gained community trust and support
- Since its introduction in 2004, over 3,500 Q Test assessments completed at Freeport

# Industry-Based Introduction....cont.

- Has lead to strong interest and application throughout Australia and Asia, primarily in remote mining regions
- Outcomes - assisting organisations optimise their indigenous training and employment outcomes
- Recent initiatives:
  - Assessment of Indigenous and migrant students, trainees & workplace candidates in remote, regional and urban environments
  - Rio Tinto Iron Ore in conjunction with Roebourne Regional Prison – Assessment of Indigenous prisoners for RTIO pre-employment job-ready program

# Roebourne Regional Prison

- Roebourne Regional Prison uses the Q Test to assess prisoners wishing to access Rio Tinto Work-Ready training.
- Selection also takes into account each candidate's prison recommendations and other relevant prison records.
- Selection takes place several weeks prior to the start of the W-R course.

## **Advantages of Q Test**

In addition to those already mentioned, the Q Test:

- enables selection from a broader range of prisoners,
- adds strength to the selection process,
- is an enjoyable and empowering experience for the prisoners.

# Requirements for Q Testing

- Trained Staff
- Q Test Kit
- Time
- Space
- Cooperation from prison

## **Future use of the Q test at Roebourne Regional Prison:**

- Ongoing Work-Ready Courses
- At Decca Station, where additional vocational training and hands-on work experience can be gained in areas of building and construction and horticulture;
- At work-camps, such as Millstream where there is a land-management focus;
- In conjunction with Prisoner Employment Placement.

## Future Issues

- Current research in the Pilbara indicates that the most significant specific factors prohibiting workforce entry and participation are emotional and behavioural difficulties – specifically in the area of parenting and family functioning.
- Assessment and relevant intervention in the area of emotional health would be an additional useful step for sustained success.
- Evaluation and further fine-tuning of such courses, use of the Q Test, together with longitudinal studies of the long-term impact of incorporating these assessment tools in prison education, will determine future directions.

# Conclusion

- Q Test provides valid, reliable, language-free, culture-fair evaluation and insight of the 'trainability' of Indigenous prisoners
- Assists prisons to optimise their training investment and reintegration pathway selections
- Can assist establish realistic, long term pathways for Indigenous prisoners
- Q Test assessment and pathway development can lead to reduced resistance to assessment, greater trainee satisfaction, greater application and a more successful reintegration program for Indigenous prisoners

## More Information:

Peter Davidson

Principal Psychologist, ValueEdge

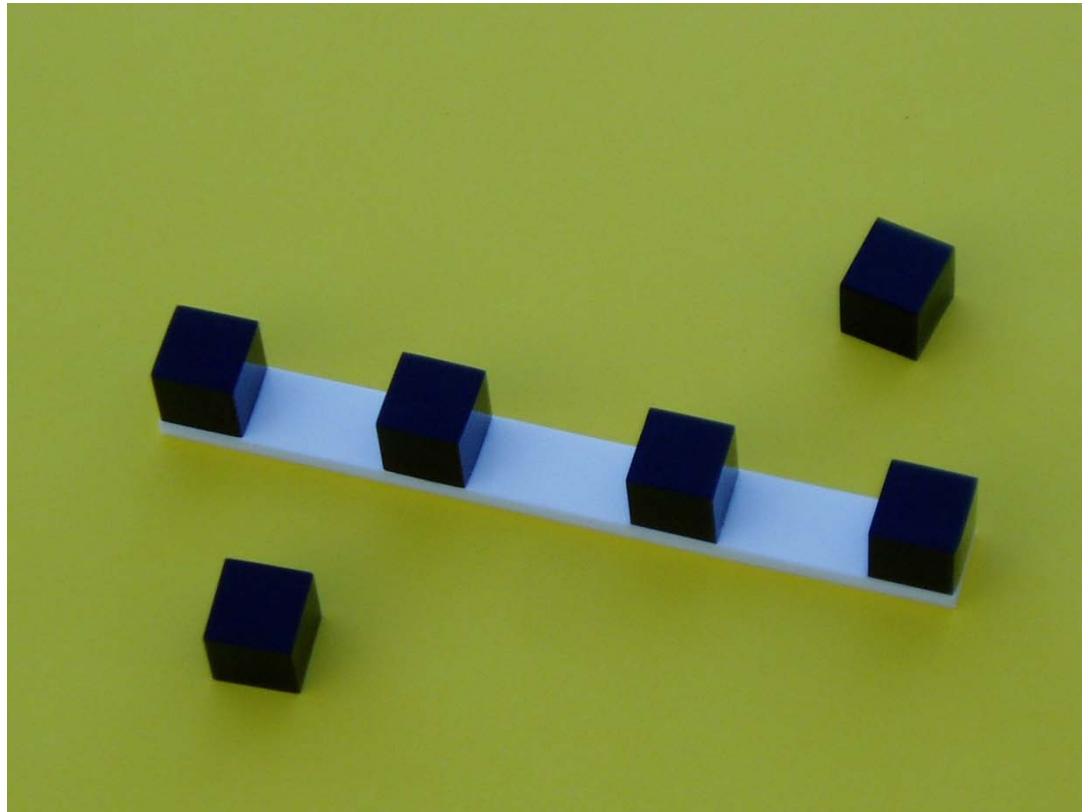
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# The Q Test

## Subtest 1: Sequential Memory



# Subtest 1: Sequential Memory



# The Q Test

## Subtest 2: Visual Memory

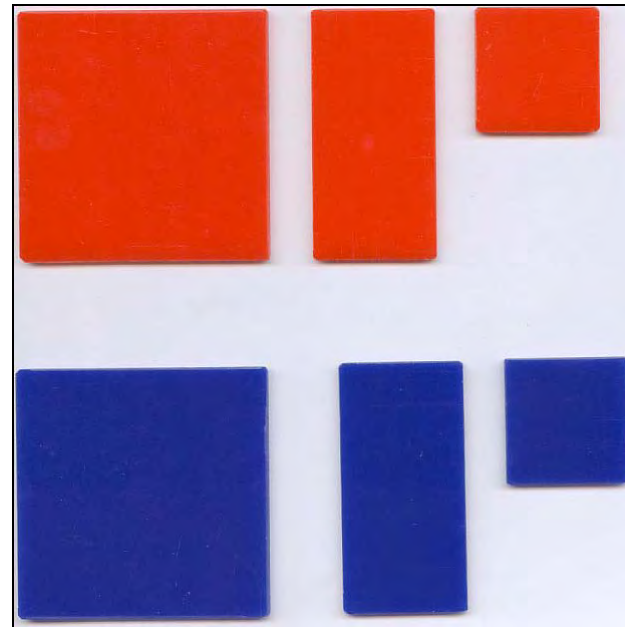
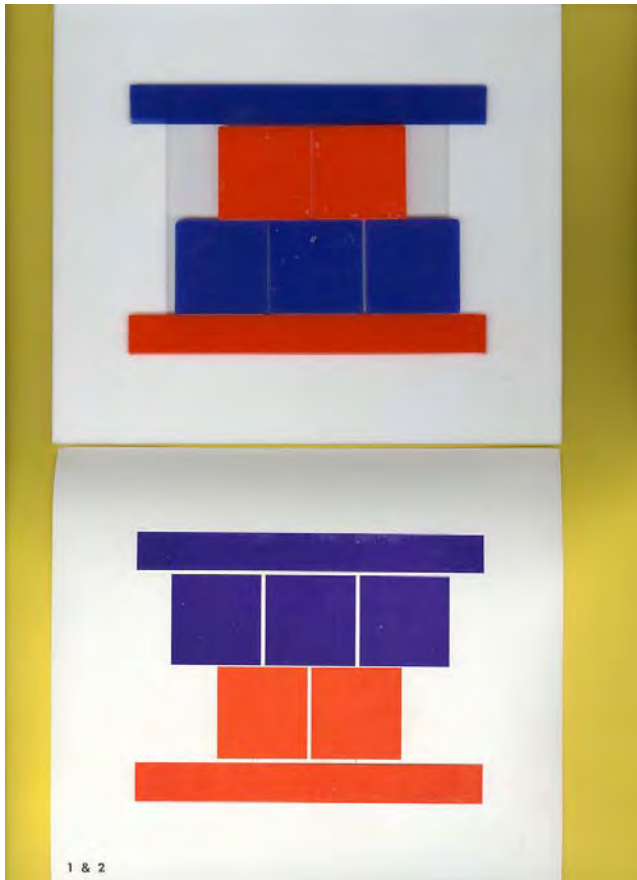


## Subtest 2: Visual Memory



# The Q Test

## Subtest 3: Planning

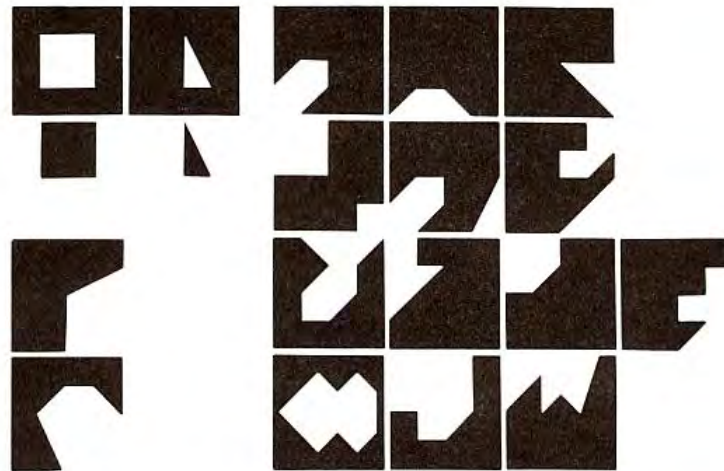


# Subtest 3: Planning



# The Q Test

## Subtest 4: Abstract Manipulation

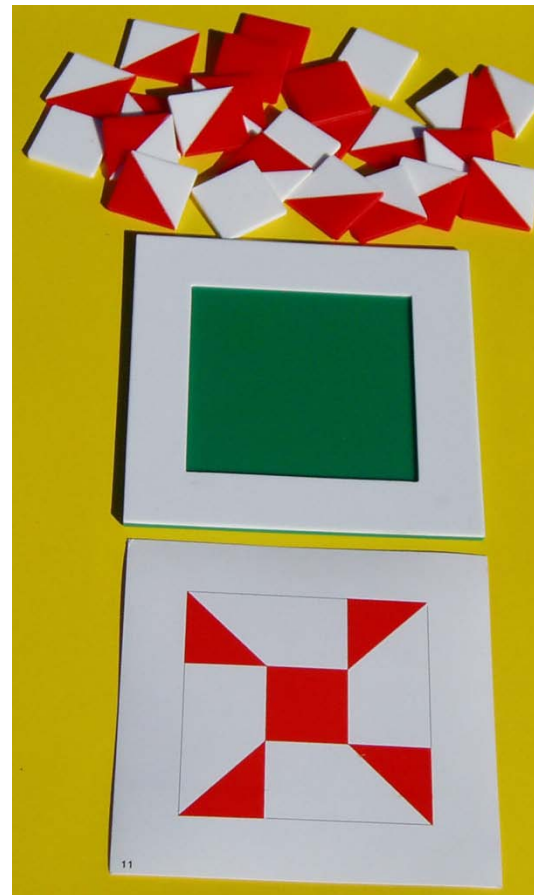


# Subtest 4: Abstract Manipulation



# The Q Test

## Subtest 5: Pattern Matching



# Subtest 5: Pattern Matching



# The Q Test

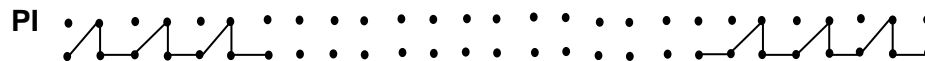
## Subtest 6: Design Sequencing

Name:  
D.O.B

Assessment date:

### 6. DESIGN SEQUENCING

#### Demonstration



# Subtest 6: Design Sequencing

