# Chapter 11
# The Delphi Method Application in the Analysis of Postgraduate Students' Attitudes on the Environmental Performance Index

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## ABSTRACT

*In the context of growing concern over the global environment and related sustainability issues, the purpose of this research is to stimulate discussion about the Environmental Performance Index (EPI) and its necessary role not only in measuring postgraduate students' attitudes about EPI, and its nine categories underpinned, but also, their important role in the development of appropriate curriculum of programs that are about environmental management and sustainable development as well. Further on, the obtained results of the presented research in the paper broaden the understanding of the opportunities for not only the Republic of Serbia but every country as well, in using the EPI methodology as it has a wide applicability in improving environmental pillars of their future sustainability.*

## INTRODUCTION

*The world we have created today as a result of our thinking thus far has problems which cannot be solved by thinking the way we thought when we created them. – Albert Einstein*

Despite the fact that "the environment provides numerous goods and services to humanity" (Radojicic, Isljamovic, Petrovic, & Jeremic, 2012), the stability of the Earth's ecology is undermined due to the activities carried out by the human species (Petrović, 2013), environmental problems reached their critical point in the 21st century (e.g. Bonnett, 2007; Mert, 2006; Flood, & Carson, 2013) and they continue to rapidly grow. This can be "documented" thanks to specific indicators, that define the "planet's health", which is unfortunately in its decay: global holocaust of all animal and plant species, destruction of forests, the disappearance of the main species of fish, coral reef destruction, destabilization of biological habitat, increasing number of diseases resistant to antibiotics, lack of fresh water sources, pollution of the air and water, increasing risk of chemicals, damage to land, rapidly declining biodiversity, dependence on pesticides and fertilizers, the increasing number of species resistant to pesticides, almost total dependence on non-renewable forms of energy sources, globally destabilized climates and increased production of weapons of mass destruction (Petrović, 2012). Parallel, the rise of the world population brought forward the inefficient consumption of natural resources (Symth, 2004), and the consequential environmental problems became the main subject of the world agenda (Young, 2009).

Therefore, the entire humankind is forced to overcome these problems if it wants to demonstrate its commitment to sustainability as a crucial ingredient for the survival of the planet Earth and the world as we know it. The urgency to deal with the sustainability issues has been putting pressure on all three basic pillars of sustainable development, which are being investigated and performed simultaneously. These three pillars are social, economic and environmental (e.g. WCED, 1987; UNCED, 1992; UNSD, 1992; Grubb, Koch, Thomson, Munson, & Sullivan, 1993; Panjabi, 1997; Earth Summit, 2002; UN, 2015). It must be noted that there is evidence of developments in all of the three pillars, but not always related in the adequate manner. Although this shows rising interest in the field of sustainability, problems may emerge that could inhibit commitments towards building an adequate and proper sustainable future. This is especially important when it comes to the complex issue of sustainable development, which refers to the environment: "We are in a state of planetary emergency, with environmental problems piling up high around us. Unless we address the various issues prudently and seriously, we are surely doomed for disaster. Current environmental problems require urgent attention" (CEF, 2015). In order to measure man's success in these efforts, various environmental metrics and indicators were developed. The task of these environmental metrics is to measure the influences on the environment caused by various technologies and human activities. One of them is the Environmental Performance Index.

*The Environmental Performance Index (EPI) ranks how well countries perform on high-priority environmental issues in two broad policy areas: protection of human health from environmental harm and protection of ecosystems. EPI is constructed through the calculation and aggregation of 20 indicators reflecting national-level environmental data. These indicators are combined into nine issue categories, each of which fit under one of two overarching objectives: Environmental Health and Ecosystem Vitality. (EPI, 2015)*

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