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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32782/2708-0366/2026.29.9>**Duha Viktoriia**

Senior Instructor at the Department of Hotel,
Restaurant and Tourism Business,
Kherson State Agrarian and Economic University
(Kherson / Kropyvnytskyi)
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4404-4350>

Дуга В.О.

Херсонський державний аграрно-економічний університет
(м. Херсон / м. Кропивницький)

EDUCATIONAL AGRITOURISM AS A TOOL FOR HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT IN UKRAINE

ОСВІТНІЙ АГРОТУРИЗМ ЯК ІНСТРУМЕНТ РОЗВИТКУ ЛЮДСЬКОГО КАПІТАЛУ УКРАЇНИ

The article examines the educational potential of agritourism and its role in human capital development. It is demonstrated that agritourism enterprises can serve not only as places for educational and practical interaction with the rural environment but also as learning environments where practical skills are developed, hands-on experience is gained, and essential competencies are acquired. The study summarizes theoretical approaches to educationally oriented agritourism and analyzes international experience in using agritourism enterprises as educational and practice-based learning environments. A model of educational agritourism as a tool for human capital development is proposed, identifying the key stakeholders involved in its implementation, sources of financial support, and approaches to evaluating its effectiveness. It is substantiated that the implementation of educational and experiential programs in agritourism contributes to human capital development, expands the functional capacity of agritourism enterprises, and supports the sustainable development of rural areas.

Keywords: educational agritourism, human capital, agritourism enterprises, practice-based learning, rural areas, sustainable development.

У статті досліджено освітні можливості агротуризму та його роль у формуванні людського капіталу в умовах сучасних соціально-економічних трансформацій в Україні. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена потребою розвитку людського капіталу та посилення ролі практико-орієнтованих освітніх середовищ в умовах сучасних суспільних змін. Метою дослідження є теоретичне обґрунтування ролі агротуристичних підприємств як освітнього середовища формування людського капіталу, що поєднує пізнавальну діяльність, практичне навчання та набуття професійного досвіду. У роботі узагальнено теоретичні підходи до трактування агротуризму як форми практико-орієнтованого навчання, що базується на принципі навчання через досвід (experiential learning). Окрему увагу приділено міжнародному досвіду, зокрема практикам країн Європейського Союзу, де агротуристичні підприємства активно використовуються як освітні майданчики для школярів, студентів і дорослих. Показано, що в таких моделях агротуризм інтегрується в систему неформальної та інформальної освіти, забезпечуючи практичне навчання та формування професійних компетентностей. Методологічну основу дослідження становлять положення теорії людського капіталу, концепції сталого розвитку та підходу experiential learning. Використано методи системного аналізу, узагальнення наукових джерел, порівняння та структурного аналізу. У результаті дослідження встановлено, що агротуристичні підприємства можуть виступати як освітні простори, де учасники отримують можливість безпосередньої взаємодії з реальними виробничими процесами,



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формують практичні навички, професійний досвід і соціальні компетентності. Запропоновано модель функціонування освітнього агротуризму як інструменту розвитку людського капіталу. Окреслено основних учасників системи, можливі джерела фінансування та підходи до оцінювання її ефективності. Також розглянуто підходи до оцінювання ефективності освітньо-орієнтованого агротуризму, які враховують не лише економічні показники діяльності, а й рівень сформованості компетентностей, соціальні ефекти та вплив на розвиток сільських територій. Обґрунтовано, що інтеграція освітньої та практичної складових в агротуризм сприяє формуванню людського капіталу, розширенню можливостей агротуристичних підприємств, зниженню сезонності їхньої діяльності та підвищенню конкурентоспроможності.

Ключові слова: *освітній агротуризм, людський капітал, агротуристичні підприємства, практичне навчання, сільські території, сталий розвиток.*

Problem statement. The current development of agritourism in Ukraine is taking place under conditions of significant socio-economic transformations caused by the war, the need for rural recovery, labour market transformation, and the increasing importance of human capital [2; 16; 18]. Under these circumstances, approaches to understanding the functions of agritourism are evolving. Alongside its traditional role as a form of tourism associated with recreation in rural areas, familiarization with rural lifestyles, and participation in farming activities, agritourism is increasingly viewed as an environment for acquiring knowledge, gaining practical experience, and developing competencies [3; 6; 9].

A distinctive feature of agritourism is that visitors not only become acquainted with rural life but also participate directly in a wide range of activities. These may include caring for plants and animals, taking part in seasonal agricultural work, attending workshops, tasting local products, and learning about production technologies and the traditions of rural communities. Such experiential engagement enables participants to acquire new knowledge and practical skills through direct experience [6; 8].

Practice-based learning is becoming increasingly important in contemporary education. Educational institutions at all levels seek to integrate theoretical instruction with the real conditions of future professional and social activities. At the same time, employers require specialists who not only possess theoretical knowledge but are also capable of applying it in practice, working effectively in teams, adapting quickly to changing conditions, and making informed decisions [4; 15; 16]. In addition, there is growing demand among children, young people, adults, and corporate groups for educational and hands-on interaction with rural environments. Consequently, increasing attention is being paid to formats that combine learning, practical activities, and direct engagement with the agricultural environment [7; 9].

In this context, agritourism offers new opportunities for education. Agritourism enterprises can serve not only as recreational destinations but also as venues for educational excursions, internships, workshops, career guidance activities, and other forms of practice-based learning. Such an approach contributes to the development of professional competencies, practical skills, a better understanding of future career opportunities, and the promotion of agricultural specializations [7; 9; 15].

Despite this, most existing studies examine agritourism primarily as a direction of tourism development, entrepreneurship, or rural development [9; 10; 13; 18]. Its educational potential and its capacity to contribute to human capital development remain insufficiently explored. Moreover, there is still no comprehensive approach to understanding educational agritourism as a tool that integrates learning, practical experience, and professional competency development. This determines the need to investigate educational agritourism as a contemporary tool for human capital development in Ukraine.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The development of agritourism has been widely addressed in the works of both Ukrainian and international scholars. Existing studies primarily focus on its role in the diversification of agricultural activities, rural development, support for local entrepreneurship, and the promotion of sustainable development [6; 11; 13; 18].

In most studies, agritourism is considered a multifunctional activity that integrates tourism, economic, social, cultural, and educational components. In particular, B. Lane defines agritourism as a form of rural tourism integrated into the local economy and territorial development [9], while C. Barbieri emphasizes its close connection with farm operations, which creates opportunities for visitors to become acquainted with rural lifestyles, local traditions, and agricultural activities [5].

A separate area of contemporary research focuses on the educational potential of agritourism. Its theoretical foundation is the concept of *experiential learning*, according to which knowledge is acquired most effectively through direct experience, practical activities, and reflection on the outcomes of that experience [8]. Within this framework, agritourism enterprises are regarded as learning environments that facilitate educational activities, the development of practical skills, and the acquisition of professional competencies [7; 15; 16].

At the same time, insufficient attention has been paid to a systematic analysis of agritourism as a tool for human capital development. In particular, further research is needed to substantiate the potential of agritourism enterprises for organizing educational excursions, workshops, internships, career guidance activities, and other forms of practice-based learning. Limited attention has also been given to the interaction between educational institutions and agritourism enterprises, the mechanisms through which professional competencies and practical experience are developed, and the contribution of such cooperation to human capital development [1; 15; 16]. These research gaps determined the choice of the research topic and defined its purpose and main objectives.

Purpose of the article. The purpose of this article is to investigate the potential of educational agritourism as a tool for human capital development in Ukraine.

To achieve this purpose, the following objectives were defined: to analyze theoretical approaches to the development of educational agritourism and its role in human capital development; to summarize international experience in the use of agritourism enterprises for educational activities; to develop a conceptual model of educational agritourism; to identify the key stakeholders involved in its implementation, the sources of financial support, and the approaches to evaluating its effectiveness; and to substantiate the significance of educational agritourism for human capital development, expanding the functional capacity of agritourism enterprises, and promoting the development of rural areas.

Main research findings. Under current conditions, agritourism can no longer be regarded solely as a form of tourism. Its potential extends far beyond recreational activities, as it integrates agricultural production, education, culture, entrepreneurship, and interaction with rural communities [9; 10; 13; 18]. Consequently, agritourism farms are increasingly becoming not only places where visitors become acquainted with rural lifestyles but also learning environments in which they acquire new knowledge, practical experience, and professional skills.

This approach is particularly relevant for Ukraine. Amid the challenges posed by the war, labour market transformations, and the need to restore human capital, the demand for practice-based learning that complements traditional education is steadily increasing [4; 15; 16]. Agritourism is well positioned to meet this demand, as it creates opportunities for direct participation in agricultural production processes and provides first-hand experience of modern farming, local technologies, and entrepreneurial practices.

The theoretical foundation of this approach is the human capital theory, according to which individuals' knowledge, skills, experience, and competencies constitute one of the key resources for economic development [16]. Equally important are the contemporary educational approaches of *experiential learning* and *learning by doing*, which emphasize that the most effective learning outcomes are achieved when individuals not only receive information but also participate directly in real-world activities [8].

Therefore, an agritourism farm should be regarded as an educational environment where learning takes place in an authentic production setting. Participants can observe technological

processes, engage in selected agricultural activities, become familiar with farm management practices, the organization of tourism services, local traditions, and rural culture. This learning format combines theoretical knowledge with practical experience, contributes to the development of professional competencies, and enables participants to gain a deeper understanding of their future profession [7; 15; 16].

International experience demonstrates that agritourism has increasingly acquired an educational dimension in many countries. At the same time, each country has developed its own model for integrating education with agricultural activities [6; 7; 12; 18].

In Italy, *educational farms* (*fattorie didattiche*) officially cooperate with educational institutions. They provide educational programmes for children, university students, and adults, introducing participants to modern agriculture, local food products, and traditional production technologies.

In Spain, *farm schools* (*granjas escuela*) offer educational programmes conducted directly on working farms. Participants gain practical experience in crop cultivation, animal care, natural resource management, and the fundamentals of agricultural entrepreneurship.

In Germany, the concept of *the Green Classroom* (*Grünes Klassenzimmer*) is widely implemented. It involves conducting classes outdoors – in gardens, on farms, and in natural environments. This approach enhances learning outcomes while fostering environmental awareness.

In France, *educational farms* (*fermes pédagogiques*) combine agricultural production with educational and social activities. They welcome schoolchildren, university students, families, and other visitors, offering thematic classes, workshops, and demonstrations of modern agricultural technologies.

Thus, international experience indicates that agritourism is gradually evolving into an environment for practice-based learning. Despite differences in organizational approaches, all of the models discussed share a common characteristic: they combine authentic production settings with educational activities, thereby facilitating the acquisition of knowledge, practical skills, and professional competencies [8; 9; 15; 18]. The synthesis of these international approaches served as the basis for developing a conceptual model of educational agritourism as a tool for human capital development (Fig. 1).

The proposed model illustrates the interrelationships among the key stakeholders of educational agritourism, the educational process, the mechanisms for competency development, and the outcomes of human capital development [1; 8; 15; 16]. At the core of the model is the educational process, which is implemented through practical training, workshops, educational excursions, internships, career exploration activities, and direct participation in the activities of agritourism enterprises. Such interaction enables participants to apply theoretical knowledge in practice, gain professional experience, and develop the competencies required for their future professional careers [7; 9; 15; 16].

The implementation of the model results in human capital development through the acquisition of practical skills, professional and entrepreneurial competencies, increased learning motivation, and informed career choice. At the same time, educational agritourism creates additional opportunities for the development of agritourism enterprises, stimulates local economic activity, and supports the development of rural areas [1; 6; 11; 18]. To provide a more detailed explanation of the relationships among the main components of the proposed model and their contribution to human capital development, a summary of its key elements is presented in Fig. 2.

As shown in Fig. 2, the central element of the model is the educational agritourism environment, within which learning takes place through direct participation in practical activities. The integration of production processes, practical experience, and interaction with professionals creates favourable conditions for the development of both professional and general competencies. The acquired knowledge, skills, and practical experience are transformed into human capital, contributing to individual professional development,

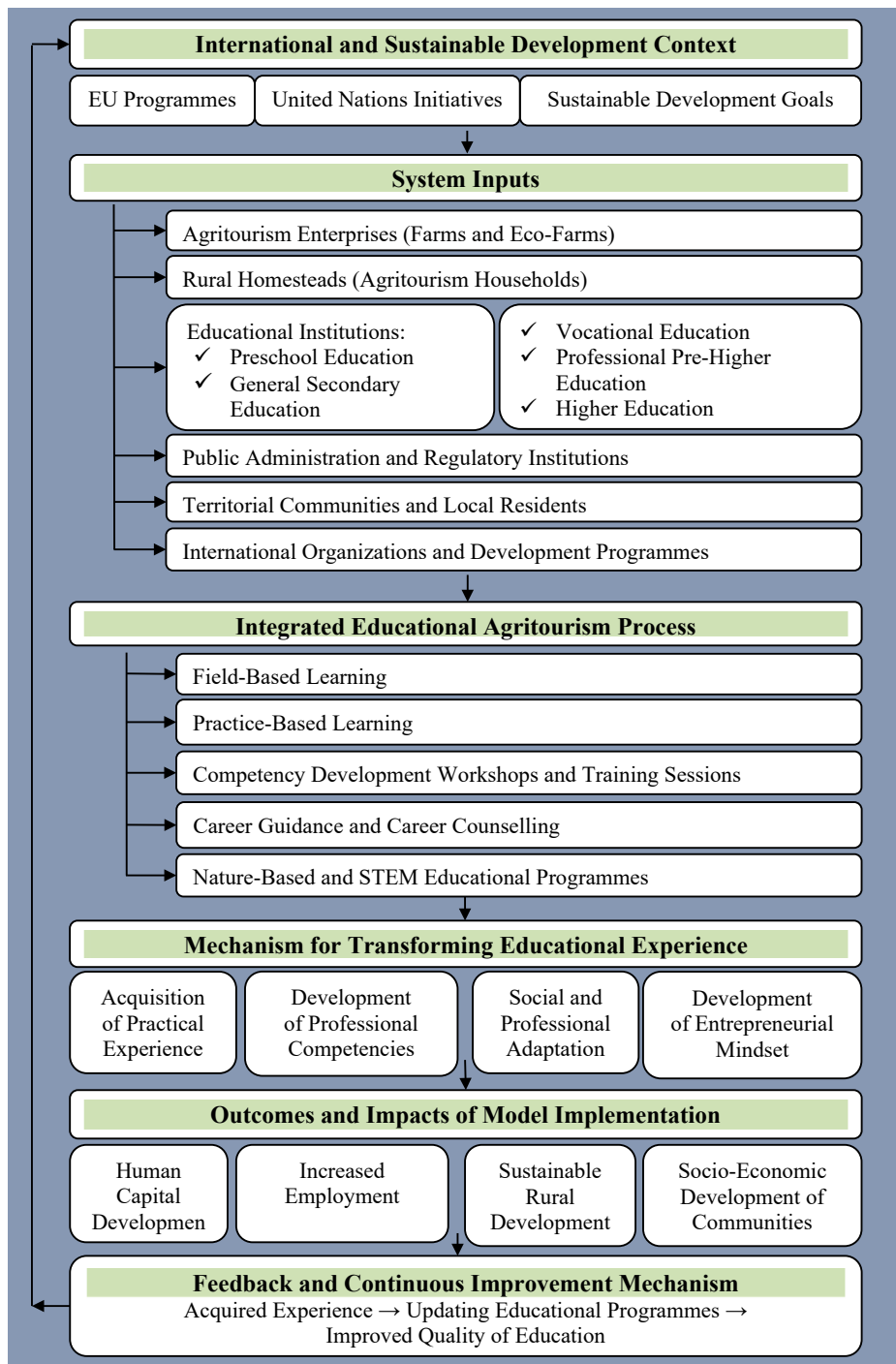


Figure 1. Model of the Functioning of Educational Agritourism as a Tool for Human Capital Development

Source: developed by the author based on [1; 6; 7; 8; 9; 15; 16; 18]

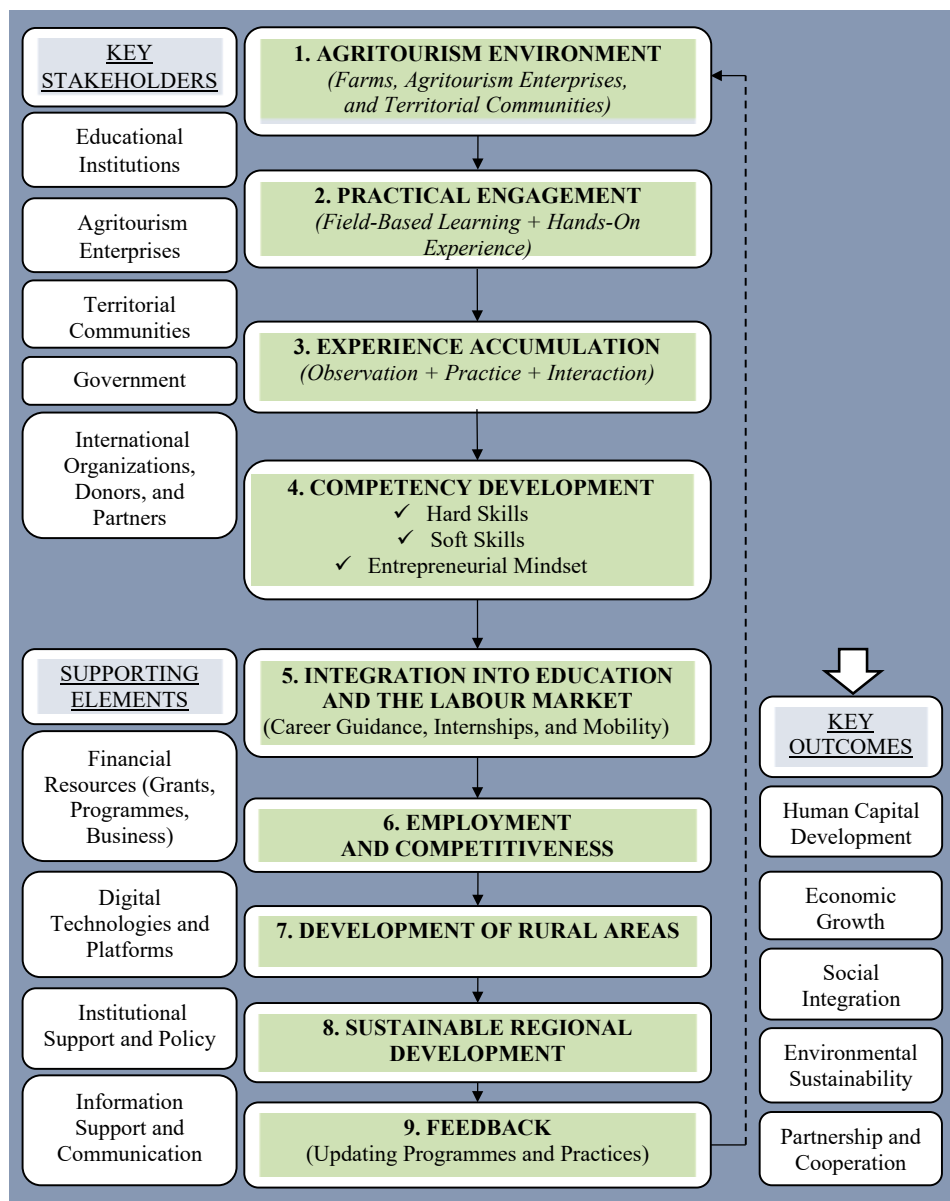


Figure 2. Interrelationships Among the Key Elements of the Educational Agritourism Model

Source: developed by the author based on [1; 7; 8; 9; 15; 16; 18]

enhancing the competitiveness of future professionals, and fostering the development of agritourism enterprises and rural areas.

The effectiveness of this model depends on the coordinated interaction of all its stakeholders. Educational institutions, agritourism enterprises, territorial communities, public authorities, and other stakeholders perform complementary functions by ensuring the organization of the educational process, practical training, resource support, and

partnership development. Such cooperation creates favourable conditions for the effective implementation of educational agritourism [4–7; 12].

The key stakeholders of educational agritourism, their functions, forms of interaction, and expected outcomes are summarized in Table 1.

As shown in Table 1, each stakeholder performs specific functions; however, the greatest effectiveness of the model is achieved through their coordinated interaction. Educational institutions are responsible for organizing the educational process and practical training, agritourism enterprises provide opportunities for gaining practical experience in authentic production settings, territorial communities contribute to the development of local infrastructure, while public authorities establish the regulatory and financial framework for the functioning of educational agritourism [4; 5; 6; 7; 12].

Agritourism enterprises play a pivotal role in this system, as they ensure the integration of learning with practical activities. During educational excursions, internships, workshops, tasting sessions, and activities introducing participants to crop production technologies or animal husbandry practices, participants not only acquire new knowledge but also gain practical experience in authentic production settings, which constitutes an essential component of competency development [1; 6; 8; 15; 16].

At the same time, the implementation of educational programmes creates additional opportunities for agritourism enterprises themselves. Expanding the range of services helps attract different categories of visitors throughout the year, reduce the seasonality of operations, diversify sources of income, and strengthen cooperation with educational institutions. Furthermore, such programmes promote agricultural professions, foster human capital development, and support the socio-economic development of rural areas [1; 3; 6; 11; 18].

The effective functioning of educational agritourism requires adequate financial support. Given the multifunctional nature of this field, its financing should involve multiple funding

Table 1

Stakeholders in Educational Agritourism: Functions and Forms of Interaction

Stakeholder	Functional Role	Forms of Interaction	Expected Outcomes
Agritourism enterprises	Practice-based learning platform	Workshops, internships, production processes, eco- and gastronomic activities	Diversified revenue streams; reduced seasonality
General secondary education institutions (schools, lyceums)	Initial career guidance	Educational excursions, STEM activities, integrated lessons	Development of basic competencies
Higher education institutions	Professional education and training	Internships, work placements, dual education	Competitive graduates
Professional pre-higher education institutions	Development of applied skills	Practical training, workshops	Training of a skilled regional workforce
Business sector	Economic partnership	Internships, cooperation, joint projects	Innovation and improved efficiency
Individual participants	Learners	Workshops, educational tours, short-term programmes	Non-formal learning
Territorial communities	Development coordination	Infrastructure development, support for local initiatives	Social cohesion
Public authorities and international organizations	Regulation and support	Programmes, grants, policies	Institutional support

Source: developed by the author based on [4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 12; 15; 16; 18]

sources, thereby ensuring the sustainable implementation of educational programmes and the development of agritourism enterprises [6; 7; 12; 15; 18]. The main funding sources, financing mechanisms, and potential areas for the use of financial resources are summarized in Table 2.

As shown in Table 2, the financial model of educational agritourism is based on a combination of public, private, and grant funding sources [6; 7; 12; 15; 18]. This approach not only ensures the implementation of educational programmes but also reduces dependence on individual funding sources, thereby enhancing the sustainability of educational programmes [7; 15]. For agritourism enterprises, it creates opportunities to diversify their activities through the organization of internships, workshops, career guidance activities, and training placements, thereby expanding the range of services, attracting visitors throughout the year, and reducing seasonality [11; 15; 18]. At the same time, educational institutions gain access to modern facilities for practical training, participants in educational programmes have the opportunity to acquire practical experience, and territorial communities receive additional incentives for socio-economic development [6; 11; 18].

To evaluate the effectiveness of educational agritourism, it is insufficient to consider only economic indicators. It is equally important to assess its impact on practice-based learning outcomes, human capital development, and rural development. Therefore, it is advisable to apply a system of indicators encompassing the economic, educational and competency-based, and socio-territorial dimensions (Table 3) [8; 15; 18].

As shown in Table 3, the proposed system of indicators provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating the effectiveness of educational agritourism across the economic, educational and competency-based, and socio-territorial dimensions [8; 18]. This approach makes it possible to assess not only the economic performance of agritourism enterprises but also the quality of practice-based learning, the level of competency development among participants, and the contribution of educational programmes to human capital development and rural development [8; 11; 16]. The integrated application of the proposed indicators provides an information base for monitoring the effectiveness of educational programmes, supporting evidence-based managerial decision-making, and improving the models for the functioning of educational agritourism as one of the directions of sustainable rural development [11; 18].

Table 2

Funding Sources and Financing Mechanisms for Educational Agritourism

Funding Source	Who Provides the Funding	Funding Mechanism	Examples of Implementation
Educational institutions	Schools, universities, and colleges	Public funding allocated to educational programmes; institutional budgets	Financing practical training, field-based classes, and career guidance programmes
Individual participants	Students, parents, and adult learners	Direct payment or co-financing	Workshops, educational tours, and practice-based training programmes
State and territorial communities	State and local budgets	Government subsidies; education and rural development programmes	Support for school field trips and the development of agritourism infrastructure
International organizations	EU, UNDP, FAO, etc.	Grant programmes; project-based funding	Educational and innovation projects for community development
Business sector	Agricultural and tourism enterprises	Partnership contributions; corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives	Joint educational programmes, internships, and dual education programmes

Source: Developed by the author

Table 3

Key Indicators for Evaluating the Effectiveness of Educational Agritourism

Dimension	Key Indicators	Evaluation Methods	Expected Outcomes
Economic	– Revenue generated from educational programmes; – Share of educational services in the overall revenue structure; – Diversification of revenue sources.	Financial analysis; financial statements	Increased revenue, reduced seasonality, enhanced economic sustainability
Educational and Competency-Based	– Number of programme participants; – Level of professional and transferable competencies acquired; – Participant satisfaction.	Testing, surveys, learning outcomes assessment	Improved quality of practice-based learning and competency development
Socio-Territorial	– Number of jobs created; – Level of community participation and youth engagement; – Partnership development.	Statistical analysis, sociological surveys, expert evaluation	Enhanced community development, increased employment, strengthened social resilience

Source: Developed by the author based on [8; 11; 18]

At the same time, the practical implementation of educational agritourism requires consideration of a number of organizational, human resource, and financial factors that determine its effectiveness. First and foremost, agritourism enterprises should be prepared not only to receive visitors but also to provide appropriate conditions for educational activities. This requires qualified personnel capable of combining practical experience with contemporary educational approaches and of working effectively with different categories of participants [7; 15].

Adequate financial support is another essential prerequisite. For small agritourism enterprises, establishing learning spaces, purchasing equipment, and arranging facilities for practical training may require additional investment. Therefore, support from the state, territorial communities, educational institutions, businesses, and international programmes plays a crucial role [6; 12; 18].

Equally important is maintaining a balance between agricultural production, tourism, and educational activities. Educational programmes should be organically integrated into the operations of agritourism enterprises, complementing their core activities while creating added value for both visitors and the enterprises themselves [5; 6; 18].

Particular attention should also be given to establishing a monitoring and evaluation system for educational agritourism. The use of comprehensive economic, educational and competency-based, and socio-territorial indicators will make it possible to objectively assess the effectiveness of implemented programmes, compare different practices, and support informed managerial decisions regarding the further development of this field [8; 11].

At the same time, contemporary approaches to organizing the educational environment in agritourism should consider not only the transfer of professional knowledge and practical skills but also the psychological comfort of participants in the learning process. Under conditions of social transformations and the consequences of wartime challenges, the creation of a safe and supportive learning environment adapted to the needs of different categories of participants becomes increasingly important. The application of trauma-informed approaches, including consideration of sensory factors, emotional states, and individual needs of learners, can enhance the effectiveness of practice-based learning and contribute to the development of both professional and socio-emotional competencies [14].

Thus, the successful development of educational agritourism depends not only on the commitment of its stakeholders but also on effective cooperation among educational institutions, agritourism enterprises, territorial communities, public authorities, and other

partners. Such cooperation creates favourable conditions for human capital development, the diversification of agritourism enterprises' activities, and the sustainable development of rural areas [11; 18].

Conclusions and prospects for further research. The study synthesizes the main results of the research on educational agritourism and substantiates its role in human capital development. It has been established that the use of agritourism enterprises as practice-based learning environments creates opportunities for the acquisition of practical experience, the development of professional and social competencies, and career guidance for different categories of participants, while simultaneously expanding the functional capacity of the enterprises themselves.

The study proposes a model for the functioning of educational agritourism that reflects the interrelationships among its key stakeholders, the educational process, the mechanisms of competency development, and the outcomes of human capital development. The proposed model makes it possible to combine the educational potential of agritourism enterprises with the needs of educational institutions, participants, territorial communities, and other stakeholders.

In addition, approaches to the financial support of educational agritourism and a system of indicators for its comprehensive evaluation have been developed. The proposed system takes into account the economic, educational and competency-based, and socio-territorial dimensions of its functioning. This approach makes it possible to assess not only the economic results of agritourism activities but also their contribution to the development of competencies, practical experience, and local communities.

The practical significance of the research findings lies in their potential application by agritourism enterprises, educational institutions, territorial communities, and public authorities in the development of educational programmes, the organization of practice-based learning, the strengthening of partnerships between education and business, and the formulation of rural development strategies.

Further research should focus on the pilot implementation of the proposed model in the activities of agritourism enterprises in Ukraine, the development of methodological guidelines for organizing educational programmes, the improvement of methods for evaluating their effectiveness, and the investigation of the impact of educational agritourism on human capital development, the professional training of different categories of participants, and the socio-economic development of rural areas.

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