

# Perspectives of In-Service and Pre-Service History Teachers on the Use of Oral History in Teaching Modern History

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**Abstract:** This article presents the findings of a quantitative questionnaire survey conducted as part of a doctoral research project focused on the use of oral history in teaching the modern history of Czechoslovakia in the second half of the twentieth century. The study draws on data collected from 308 in-service history teachers at primary and secondary schools and 108 pre-service history teachers enrolled in teacher education programmes. The results highlight opportunities for a more effective integration of the oral history method both into the teaching of history in secondary education and into the preparation of future teachers. At the same time, the findings are in line with the current priorities of the ongoing curriculum reform.

**Keywords:** oral history; modern history; Czechoslovakia; history teaching; secondary education; history teachers; questionnaire survey

Oral history represents a specific didactic strategy that enables students to engage with eyewitness testimony and, through living memory, to gain a deeper understanding of events from the recent past. This article draws on a doctoral research project that examined the possibilities and limitations of integrating oral history into history education at the secondary level and proposed pathways towards its more effective implementation. The research combined a comparative analysis of Czech and German history textbooks with a questionnaire survey among in-service and pre-service history teachers, supplemented by in-depth interviews with selected educators.<sup>1</sup>

Although interest in the educational use of oral history has been growing in recent years, systematic empirical research on its implementation in the Czech school context is still missing. Existing studies have focused mainly on theoretical and methodological aspects or on case studies of individual educational projects, rather than on a broader quantitative analysis capturing actual classroom practice and the perspectives of future teachers. This gap makes it difficult to understand how oral history is perceived by in-service and pre-service history teachers, which factors facilitate or hinder its use in schools, and how these insights may contribute to both the innovation of teacher preparation and the curriculum.

The aim of the research was to identify how in-service and pre-service history teachers in the Czech Republic employed oral history in teaching modern history and which factors influenced its integration into classroom practice. The article therefore presents the findings of a quantitative questionnaire survey examining in-service and pre-service history teachers' attitudes towards oral history and identifies the key conditions for its effective incorporation into the teaching of modern history<sup>2</sup>. The study also responds to the ongoing curriculum

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<sup>1</sup> This article also draws on a presentation delivered on 11 September 2025 at the conference *Trends in Humanities and Social Sciences Research*, organised by the Department of Social Sciences of the Faculty of Education, Palacký University Olomouc.

<sup>2</sup> In accordance with the terminology used in history textbooks, the term *modern history* is employed here as a working designation for the period of the second half of the twentieth century, although from a historiographical perspective it would be more accurate to refer to it as *contemporary history*.

reform, which emphasises the development of historical thinking, inquiry-based learning, and civic competencies in students. In this way, the article offers not only empirical evidence on the current use of this method, but also guidance for the systematic inclusion of oral history in both history teaching and future teacher education.

## 1 Theoretical Foundations and Research Situation

In the Czech context, the research of oral history in education has been developing gradually, particularly over the past two decades. The key theoretical and methodological foundations were formulated by Miroslav Vaněk and Pavel Mücke, whose works (*Naslouchat hlasům paměti*, 2007; *Třetí strana trojúhelníku*, 2011) laid the groundwork for a systematic reflection on the potential of this method within the social sciences. The didactic dimension was first brought to the forefront in studies published in 2010 (*Škola v orální historii – orální historie ve škole*), which linked inquiry-based learning with the development of students' historical consciousness. A major role in terms of public outreach has been played by the non-profit organisation Post Bellum through its *Stories of Our Neighbours* project, as well as by the *One World in Schools* programme of People in Need. However, systematic academic research into their concrete impact on history education remains largely absent.

Leading institutional hubs include the Oral History Centre at the Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the journal *Memo*, in which Naděžda Morávková opened a debate on the ethical and didactic challenges of working with eyewitnesses (Morávková, 2012). Additional contributions can be found in master's theses focusing on the use of oral history at the primary and lower-secondary levels (Böhmová, 2010; Prunerová, 2011), which indicate a growing interest in the method already within pre-service teacher preparation. Methodological inspiration is also provided by the RVP.cz portal and the *History Education in the 21st Century* project, whose publication *Paměť a projektové vyučování v dějepise* offered the first systematic connection between memory studies and classroom practice.

In the international context, the educational use of oral history has a longer tradition, particularly in German-speaking and Anglophone countries. Gerhard Henke-Bockschatz's *Oral History im Geschichtsunterricht* (2014) provides a foundational model for incorporating oral history sources into teaching, while Felicitas Söhner's *Teaching Oral History at University* (2022) focuses on its application within university-based teacher education. In the United States and the United Kingdom, oral history is widely regarded as a means of fostering historical thinking and civic engagement (Seixas & Morton, 2013; Lévesque, 2009). More recent studies have also reflected on the ongoing processes of digitalisation and multimodality in education (Sielaff et al., 2024; Smyth et al., 2023), which further expand the possibilities for working with eyewitness testimony in online learning environments.

The current development of oral history is closely linked to digitalisation, which has transformed the ways in which oral sources are collected, preserved, and interpreted. As Sam Wineburg (2018, p. 5) notes, the pace at which new forms of information production and circulation are emerging often exceeds our capacity to critically reflect on them. Alongside well-founded interpretations, the online environment also facilitates the spread of distorted or deliberately manipulated narratives of the past, which reinforces the need for a systematic development of historical and media literacy. This, in turn, highlights the growing importance of digital ethics and responsibility when working with historical sources, including oral history.

As Smyth, Nyhan, and Flinn observe with reference to Alistair Thomson, digital technologies are not merely technical tools but fundamentally reshape the methodology and epistemology of oral history. They enable faster data collection and dissemination, the creation of extensive online archives, and the integration of audiovisual formats into educational practice. This emerging field of “digital oral history” opens up new possibilities for working with memory, while at the same time placing higher demands on the ethical and interpretive dimensions of testimonies (Smyth et al., 2023).

The rapid expansion of digital tools has also made it possible to conduct interviews remotely through videoconferencing platforms (e.g., Zoom, MS Teams, Google Meet, FaceTime or Signal), which became particularly widespread during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hlaváček, 2021, pp. 61–64). Although remote interviews increased the accessibility of respondents, they also altered the communicative dynamics between interviewer and narrator. The online environment reduces the intensity of natural interaction, non-verbal cues, and the sense of intimacy – all of which are crucial for the authentic sharing of personal memories (Sielaff et al., 2024, p. 1). As Harari (2019, pp. 14–15) reminds us, the social sciences must reflect not only on the benefits of technological innovation, but also on its broader consequences, which transform the very nature of human communication. Digitalisation thus expands technical possibilities while simultaneously requiring new forms of empathy, trust, and methodological self-reflection (Smyth & Flinn, 2023, p. 729).

Closely related to this is the growing importance of ethical principles in oral history – particularly respect for anonymity and voluntary participation, the protection of personal data, and the informed consent of narrators regarding the processing and archiving of their testimony. As the Oral History Association (2018) emphasises, the ethics of oral history extend beyond legal safeguards; they embody a fundamental scholarly attitude of responsibility towards the individuals whose life stories are being mediated. Vaněk and Mücke (2011, pp. 18–21) similarly stress that ethics in oral history lie above all in treating the narrator as an equal partner in the research process, whose perspective, dignity, and safety must always be protected.

Digitalisation and ethics can thus be seen as two sides of the same process: technological progress enables broader dissemination of oral testimony, yet also requires deeper reflection on the ways in which such testimony is collected, interpreted, and shared. In digital environments, the boundary between private and public space becomes increasingly blurred, calling for more sensitive approaches to the publication and archiving of data. For contemporary history education, this represents both an opportunity and a responsibility – to harness the digital potential of oral history in ways that respect the dignity of narrators, safeguard their privacy, and preserve the credibility of historical knowledge.

From a comparative perspective, it is evident that while oral history is firmly embedded in history education and teacher training in German-speaking and Anglophone countries, Czech research remains at the stage of partial initiatives. A comprehensive empirical overview of the frequency, forms, and barriers of its use in school practice is still missing – a gap that this article seeks to address.

### **1.1 Value and Memory Dimension of Oral History**

Oral history goes beyond a research method; it represents a way of cultivating values in history education that are often neglected by traditional fact-based instruction — such as critical thinking, empathy, and civic competencies. At its core lies respect for individual

experience and for the authentic voice of the person who takes part in interpreting the past. Recording personal memories, attitudes, and emotions does not merely generate factual knowledge; above all, it enables an understanding of the meanings that individuals attribute to their past (Kölbl & Konrad, 2015, pp. 17–28).

From a didactic perspective, oral history allows students to approach history “from below”, through concrete human experiences that complement or amend official narratives. This approach fosters critical source work in which students learn to question fixed interpretations, compare multiple perspectives, and reflect on the subjectivity of every narrative source. At the same time, they come to realise that historical knowledge emerges in a dialogue among memory, emotions, and rational analysis (Söhner, 2022, pp. 36–38).

Working with eyewitness interviews also nurtures empathy and civic awareness. When confronted with authentic life stories, students reconsider stereotypes, prejudices, and black-and-white interpretations of historical events (Seixas & Morton, 2013, pp. 2–10). In this respect, oral history serves as a safeguard against the ideologisation of history, reminding learners of the plurality of perspectives and restoring the human dimension of the past (Vaněk & Mücke, 2011, p. 162). In pedagogical practice, the method acts as a counterbalance to “flattened factualism” and creates space for intergenerational and intercultural dialogue. It helps students understand that history is not merely a sequence of events, but a living process of meaning-making that concerns each of us (Duquette, 2015, pp. 53–62).

The value dimension of oral history is closely intertwined with its memory dimension, which is key to understanding the relationship between personal experience and collective consciousness. Memory constitutes one of the core concepts of oral history and, at the same time, its greatest didactic potential. Whereas history seeks generalisation, memory remains personal, selective, and fluid (Snyder, 2021, pp. 286–287). This difference is not an obstacle; on the contrary, working with the subjectivity of memory enables students to grasp that the past is not a static set of facts but a dynamic process of interpretation.

Theories of collective memory, rooted in the work of Maurice Halbwachs, show that every act of remembering is embedded within shared social frameworks — language, symbols, rituals, and institutions. Collective memory both shapes our identity and is shaped by the current societal needs. As Jan Assmann emphasises, cultural and communicative memory exist in a constant tension between individual experience and shared meaning, between remembering and forgetting (Šubrt, Maslowski & Lehmann, 2015, pp. 15–38).

This tension between memory and forgetting has essential didactic value. Students learn that every society contains topics about which it keeps silent — the so-called “silent sites of memory”. These reveal the ways in which power structures and ideological frameworks shape collective remembrance (Le Goff, 2007, pp. 32–33). Educational work with memory thus contributes not only to critical thinking but also to an understanding of what is told from the past and what is marginalised or suppressed.

Oral history also transforms subjectivity into a tool of knowledge. As Portelli shows, the value of testimony lies not primarily in its factual accuracy but in the significance individuals attribute to their past. Working with personal memories therefore does not weaken historical credibility; rather, it broadens it by incorporating the dimensions of understanding, empathy, and reflection (Kubišová, 2015, pp. 91–94).

In this sense, memory becomes not only a source of historical knowledge but also a medium of civic education, helping students recognise that silence, forgetting, and interpretative plurality are natural elements of social life and of every historical experience.

## 1.2 Practical Use of Oral History in History Education

Based on the above, this article understands the oral history method primarily as a didactic strategy that mediates eyewitness testimony in the teaching of modern history while fostering students' critical engagement with sources, empathy, and civic competencies.

In the school environment, the method carries not only a methodological but also a pronounced ethical dimension. Lived experience constitutes a core element of historical reality and forms an integral part of historical thinking. The narrator provides a partial account of the past, interpreting it both from the perspective of a participant in historical events and from the standpoint of a present-day reflective subject. Oral history, therefore, does not replace the traditional reconstruction of historical facts; rather, it enriches it with a subjective, embodied dimension, helping students understand the openness and multilayered nature of history (Beneš, 2014, pp. 196–197).

One of the greatest strengths of this method is that it brings the benefit of stories into history education. Personal narratives complement great abstract history and allow students to grasp the past through a beginning, tension, resolution, and personal meaning – that is, in a form that connects historical thinking with memory and lived experience. The personalisation of history through life stories can take place, for example, through participation in Post Bellum projects, engaging with family history, inquiry-based projects, dramatisation, or experiential pedagogy. Although these approaches are demanding in terms of preparation, they can generate a strong emotional experience and deepen historical awareness (Beneš, 2014, pp. 197–198).

Debates on the use of oral history in schools often highlight teachers' limited awareness of the method and its insufficient presence in pre-service teacher education. Implementing oral history projects requires cooperation between teachers and oral history specialists (Kitson, Husbands & Steward, 2011, pp. 28–39), as well as adequate time and financial or technical resources. Another obstacle may be the risk of a superficial use of interviews without a clear pedagogical purpose (Melvin, 2019, p. 118).

Nevertheless, the arguments in favour of integrating oral history into history education clearly prevail. The method actively involves students, develops their inquiry, communication, and critical thinking skills, fosters intergenerational dialogue, and connects school learning with local and family contexts. Gerhard Henke-Bockschatz (2014, pp. 10–13) summarises its benefits in five key points:

- 1) direct student encounters with historical testimony;
- 2) a high level of learner activity and suitability for project-based learning;
- 3) strengthening connections between schools, local communities, and regional history;
- 4) development of the ability to critically evaluate media and popular representations of the past;
- 5) respect for narrators' need to share their life stories and reflection on the subjectivity of their testimony.

The broader potential of oral history in schools lies in its ability to combine methodological precision, ethical sensitivity, and the narrative power of personal testimony, making it an attractive and meaningful component of modern history teaching.

In light of both the possibilities and barriers identified above, a quantitative questionnaire survey was conducted among in-service and pre-service history teachers in

order to determine how frequently and in which forms the method was currently used, and which factors influenced its integration into school practice.

### 1.3 The Place of Oral History in the Revised National Curriculum Framework (RVP ZV)<sup>3</sup>

The ongoing revision of curricular documents emphasises a competence-based approach to education and a closer connection of history teaching with key competencies, basic literacies, and cross-curricular themes. In the revised RVP ZV, history is defined as a separate subject within the educational area *People and Society*. Its aim is to develop students' historical consciousness, to enable them to work with historical sources, to critically evaluate social phenomena, and to understand the interconnections between the past, the present, and the future (MŠMT, 2025, pp. 90–93).

A significant innovation is the strengthened emphasis on critical engagement with information, the ability to identify manipulative strategies, and an understanding of how historical events relate to contemporary societal challenges. This approach is also consistent with emphasis on the development of key competencies for citizenship and sustainability — in particular active participation, respect for democratic principles, and the ability to navigate global contexts (MŠMT, 2025, pp. 46–57).

The revised curriculum further reflects the goals of the *Czech Education Policy Strategy 2030+*, which sets out two main priorities: a focus on the development of competencies necessary for life in the 21st century, and the reduction of educational inequalities. These priorities translate into a call for curricular “unburdening”, the strengthening of civic education, increased use of formative assessment, and greater individualisation of learning. Another key element is the integration of digital technologies and the linking of formal and non-formal education, for example through cooperation with memory institutions and cultural organisations (MŠMT, 2020, pp. 5–28).

With regard to the inclusion of oral history in the teaching of modern history, the revised RVP ZV provides an opportunity for the meaningful use of inquiry-based approaches and authentic historical sources. In this way, history teaching can support not only cognitive aims but also the development of key competencies, particularly critical thinking, work with information, and civic participation.

The integration of oral history into teaching is therefore not merely a matter of teachers' methodological choices but also of the systemic conditions defined by curricular documents and teacher education programmes.

Based on the theoretical and curricular grounding outlined above, the oral history method has the potential to significantly enrich the teaching of modern history — not only as an inquiry-based approach, but also as a means of fostering students' civic and value competencies. In line with the revised RVP ZV (MŠMT, 2025, pp. 37–52, 90–93), oral history can be understood as a tool for developing key competencies linked to the inquiry-based approach and to the use of authentic sources.

However, the actual application of oral history in classroom practice remains insufficiently documented, and empirical evidence is still lacking regarding how in-service and pre-service teachers perceive, implement, and evaluate the conditions for its use. The following section therefore presents the aims, research questions, and methodology of a

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<sup>3</sup> The Framework Educational Programme for Primary Education (RVP ZV), the national curriculum for primary and lower-secondary education in the Czech Republic.

quantitative survey examining the attitudes of in-service and pre-service history teachers towards the use of oral history in teaching modern history.

## **2 Research Aims and Research Questions**

The main aim of this study was to determine how in-service and pre-service history teachers in the Czech Republic perceive and use the oral history method in teaching modern Czechoslovak history of the second half of the twentieth century, and to identify the key benefits and barriers associated with its integration into classroom practice.

For the purposes of this article, the following research questions were formulated:

- 1) What experience do in-service and pre-service history teachers have with the oral history method?
- 2) What advantages and disadvantages of the method are perceived by both groups of respondents?
- 3) Which conditions (technical, temporal, or methodological) do they consider crucial for its effective use?
- 4) What differences exist in the preparedness and willingness to use the method between in-service and pre-service history teachers?

This set of questions makes it possible to compare the perspectives of in-service and pre-service history teachers and to identify the factors that may influence the broader implementation of oral history in history education.

## **3 Methodology**

The research formed part of a mixed-methods research design combining a quantitative questionnaire survey with subsequent qualitative interviews. This article presents only the results of the quantitative phase.

### **3.1 Research Sample**

The questionnaire survey was conducted online between December 2024 and March 2025 using the Microsoft Forms platform. In total, 308 responses were obtained from in-service history teachers working at primary and secondary schools, and 108 responses from pre-service history teachers studying at various faculties in the Czech Republic. The in-service teachers were contacted via the *Atlas školství* database, while the pre-service teachers were reached in cooperation with university lecturers.

### **3.2 Instruments and Questionnaire Structure**

Separate anonymous questionnaires were prepared for each group, each taking approximately 15–20 minutes to complete. The structure of the questionnaires was analogous and consisted of three main parts:

- 1) Demographic data – this section collected the basic characteristics of the respondents, such as age, gender, and length of teaching experience (for in-service teachers) or

length and form of study (for pre-service teachers). It also included information on subject specialisation, school type, and the respondents' subjective perception of how their qualification influenced the use of the oral history method.

- 2) Attitudes towards the oral history method – this section focused on the perceived benefits and drawbacks of the method, the respondents' previous experience with its use, and the need for methodological support. It also included items mapping which informational resources or tools would facilitate its implementation in the classroom.
- 3) Practical experience – this section examined concrete ways in which the method was used in teaching, including the types of topics addressed, the sources employed (e.g., eyewitnesses, archival recordings, or project-based activities), the availability of technical facilities, and feedback from students.

The questionnaires also included open-ended questions, the responses to which were analysed using thematic analysis based on open (inductive) coding. For closed-ended questions with the option to add comments, a simplified thematic categorisation was applied. The questionnaires were author-designed with respect to the aims of the research and the specific characteristics of using the oral history method in education. Content validity was ensured through expert consultation and pilot testing on a small sample of respondents, which led to the refinement of several items. The reliability of the instrument was strengthened by a unified question structure, clearly defined response categories, and the possibility of comparing responses between the two groups. This procedure contributed to ensuring methodological adequacy and the interpretability of the findings.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

The data were first processed using descriptive statistics (relative frequencies in %), after which the hypotheses were tested using inferential statistical methods appropriate to the nature of the data.

In the doctoral thesis, a broader set of twelve hypotheses was formulated and divided into three groups:

- hypotheses concerning in-service history teachers;
- hypotheses relating to pre-service history teachers;
- comparative hypotheses enabling a comparison of both respondent groups.

For the purposes of this article, three representative hypotheses were selected — one from each group — as they best correspond to its focus:

- **H1:** In-service history teachers who were introduced to the oral history method during their university studies are more likely to use it in their teaching than those who were not.
- **H2:** Pre-service history teachers who encountered the oral history method during their secondary schooling show greater willingness to use it in the future.
- **H3:** Pre-service history teachers perceive a greater need for methodological support for the use of the oral history method in teaching than in-service teachers.

This selection captures the perspectives of both respondent groups and allows for their comparison, while also reflecting the key factors influencing the potential for a broader implementation of the oral history method in the classroom.

## 4 Results

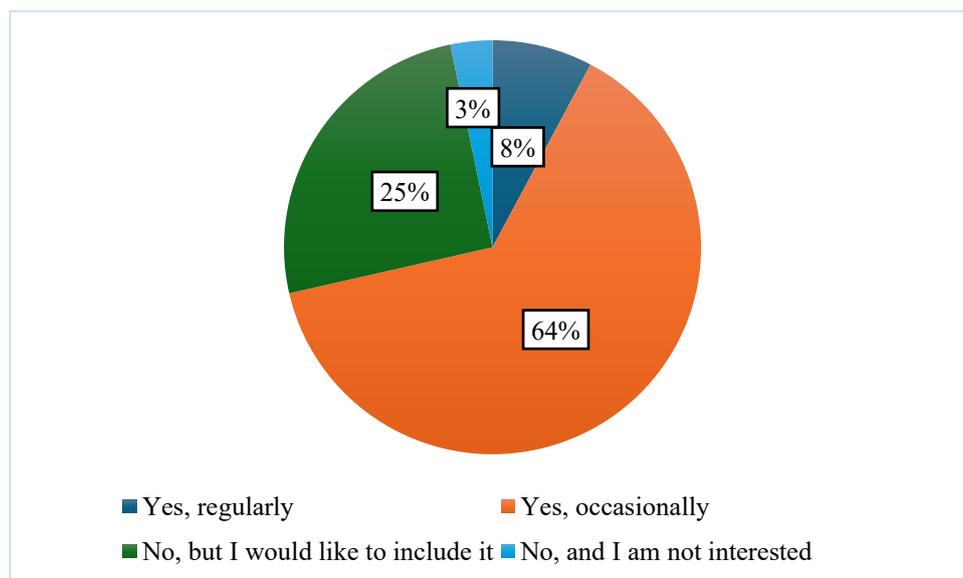
### 4.1 Experience with the Oral History Method

The first part of the analysis focused on the respondents' experience with the oral history method. For in-service history teachers, the primary indicator was the frequency of its use in teaching, while for pre-service history teachers the key indicator was the extent to which they had encountered the method during their university studies. These indicators provide a basic overview of the method's presence in practice and of how future teachers become acquainted with it.

Among in-service teachers, the most frequent response was occasional use of the method (64 %). One quarter of the respondents (25 %) reported that they did not currently use it but intended to include it in the future. Regular use was indicated by 8 % of teachers, while 3 % stated that they were not interested in using the method. The results therefore show that the method is relatively well known among teachers, although its application tends to be supplementary and unsystematic.

**Figure 1:** In-service history teachers – use of the oral history method in history lessons (n = 308)

**Source:** own elaboration

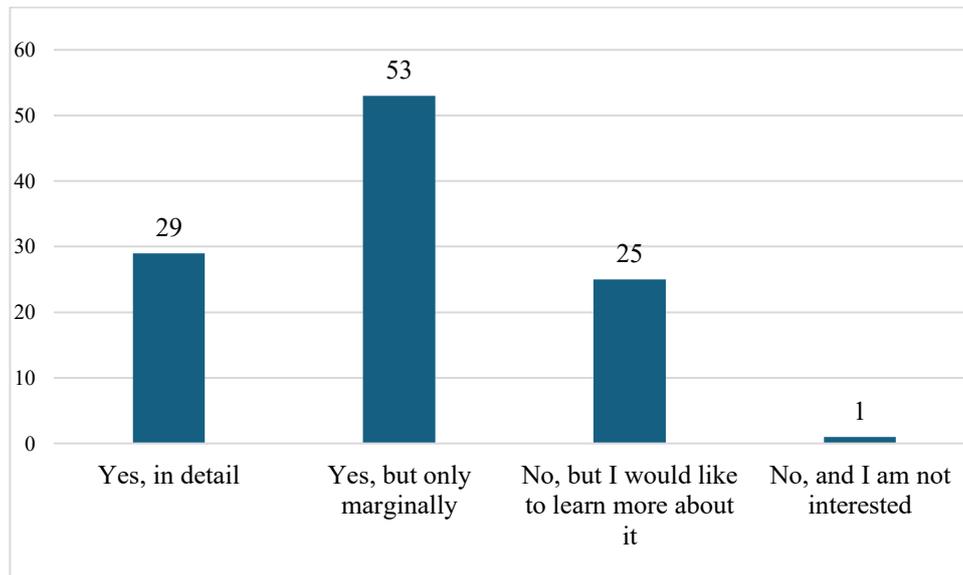


With regard to the teaching context, oral history is most often used in modern history lessons, particularly in connection with thematic areas such as the Second World War, the post-war period and the events of 1989. Teachers usually implement it in the form of short-term activities or projects, and less frequently as a regularly planned component of instruction.

Approximately half of the pre-service teachers reported encountering the method primarily within university courses, while a smaller proportion had been introduced to it during their secondary schooling. Only a minority of the respondents indicated that they had used the method during their teaching practice, which reflects the limited time and organisational possibilities of teacher training.

**Figure 2.** Pre-service history teachers – exposure to the oral history method during university studies (n = 108)

**Source:** own elaboration



The comparison of both groups shows that in-service teachers have more frequent practical experience with the method, although predominantly on an occasional basis. Pre-service teachers usually encounter the method only marginally during their studies, with more in-depth familiarity reported by roughly one quarter of them. Interestingly, there is a considerably higher proportion in the group of pre-service teachers of those who have not yet worked with the method but would like to use it in the future. This contrast between the groups can be interpreted in light of the differing opportunities for practical application during teacher education and professional practice. The results also point to the need to strengthen methodological preparation within teacher training.

These findings are followed up by the next section of the analysis, which focuses on the perceived benefits and limitations of the oral history method and examines how in-service and pre-service teachers evaluate its potential and constraints in practice.

#### **4.2 Perceived Benefits and Limitations of the Method**

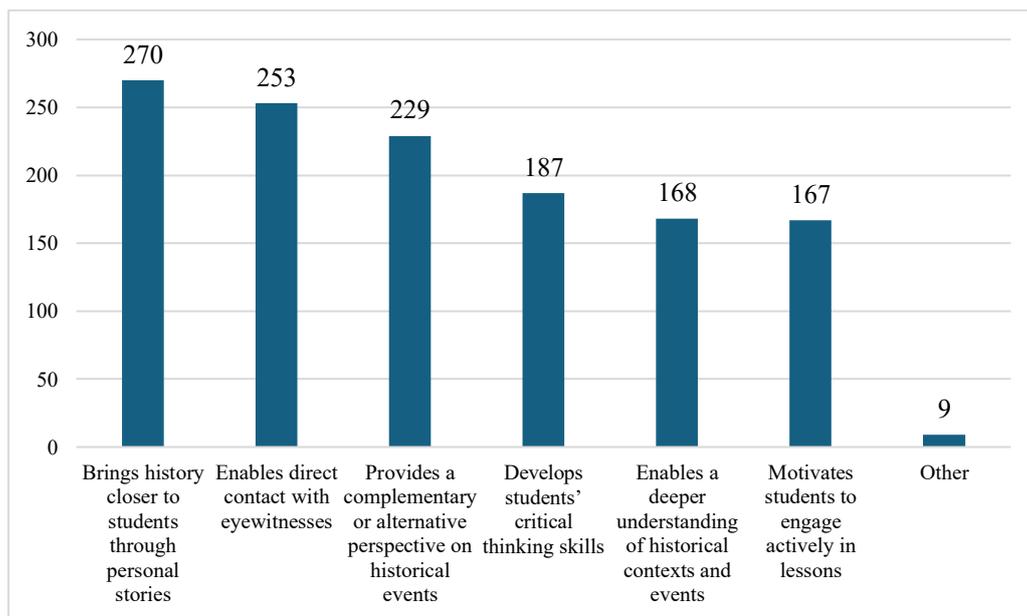
The analysis further examined which key benefits and limitations of the oral history method were reported by the respondents. Among in-service history teachers, the most frequently identified benefits were “bringing history closer to students through personal stories” (88 %), “enabling direct contact with eyewitnesses” (82 %), and “providing a complementary or alternative perspective on historical events” (74 %). These items dominate the dataset and indicate that the method is primarily perceived as a means of

presenting history through authentic, lived experience. Approximately 60 % of the respondents also highlighted its contribution to the development of critical thinking and to a deeper understanding of historical contexts. The findings suggest that in-service teachers view oral history not only as a supplement to traditional instruction but also as a tool that supports analytical and value-oriented engagement with the past.

**Figure 3.** In-service history teachers – main benefits of using the oral history method in history lessons (n = 308)

**Note:** The respondents could select multiple options; therefore, the total number of responses exceeds the number of respondents and the percentage total does not equal 100 %.

**Source:** own elaboration.

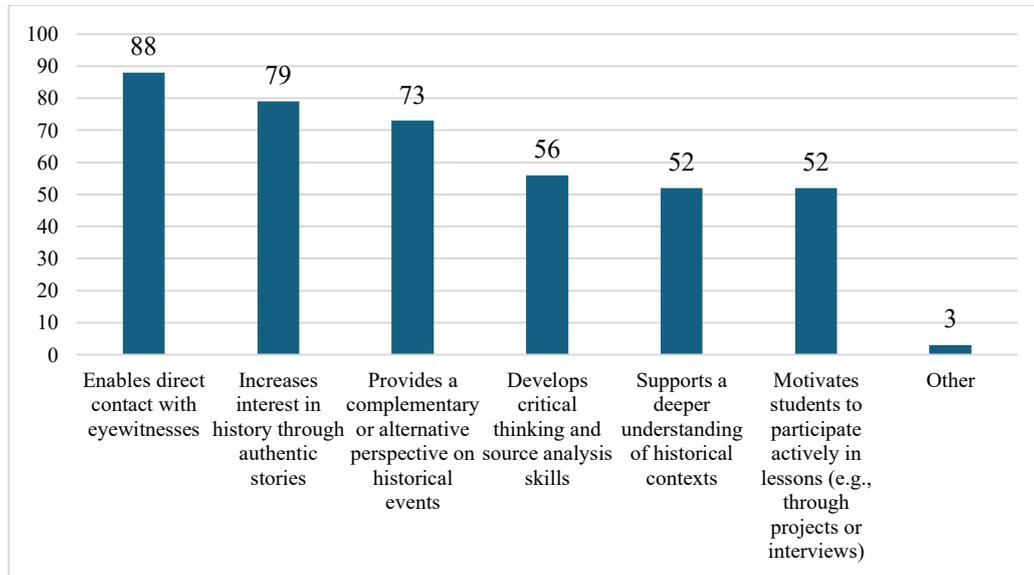


Pre-service teachers reported similar benefits but placed stronger emphasis on the motivational and personal dimension of the method. They most frequently noted that oral history could increase engagement in lessons through authentic testimony and foster both critical thinking and empathy. A substantial proportion also emphasised that the method encouraged active student involvement and helped learners interpret historical events from multiple perspectives.

**Figure 4.** Pre-service history teachers – main benefits of using the oral history method in history lessons (n = 108)

**Note:** The respondents could select multiple options; therefore, the total number of responses exceeds the number of respondents and the percentage total does not equal 100 %.

**Source:** own elaboration



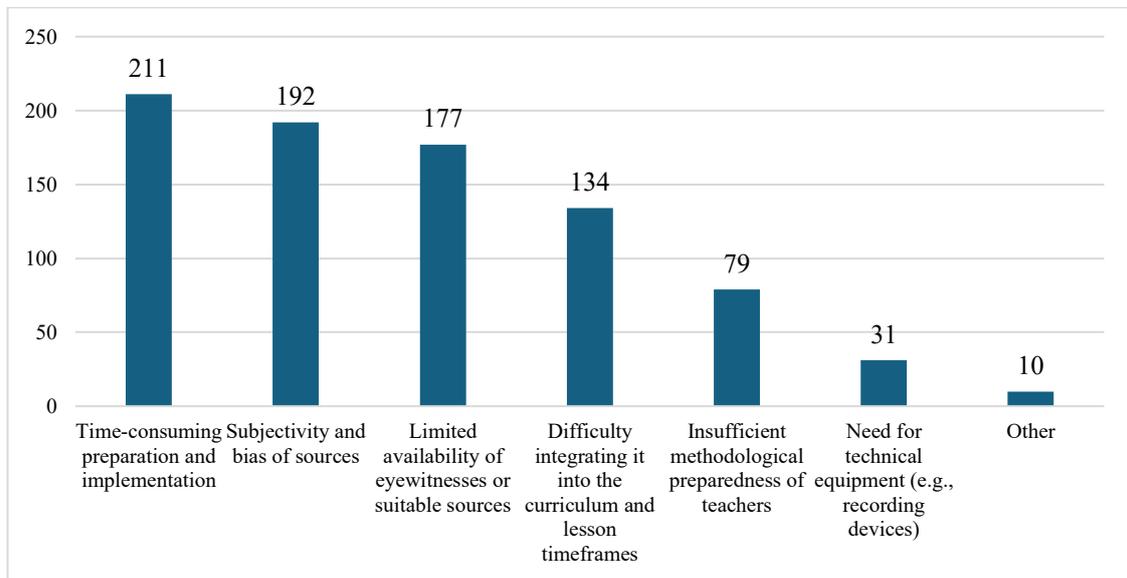
A comparison of both groups reveals that in-service teachers tend to emphasise the cognitive and content-related benefits of the method, whereas pre-service teachers accentuate its motivational and emotional aspects. Both groups, however, agree that the method cultivates competencies that go beyond fact-based instruction and supports students' ability to interpret the past independently.

With regard to limitations, in-service teachers most frequently reported the time demands of preparation and implementation (69 %), the subjective nature of sources (62 %), and the limited availability of eyewitnesses or suitable recordings (58 %). Some respondents also pointed to the difficulty of integrating the method into existing timeframes and curricular requirements (44 %), as well as to insufficient methodological preparedness (26 %). The need for technical equipment was considered far less significant (10 %), suggesting that the barriers to implementing the method were primarily organisational and methodological rather than technical.

**Figure 5.** In-service history teachers – main limitations of using the oral history method in history lessons (n = 308)

**Note:** The respondents could select multiple options; therefore, the total number of responses exceeds the number of respondents and the percentage total does not equal 100 %.

**Source:** own elaboration

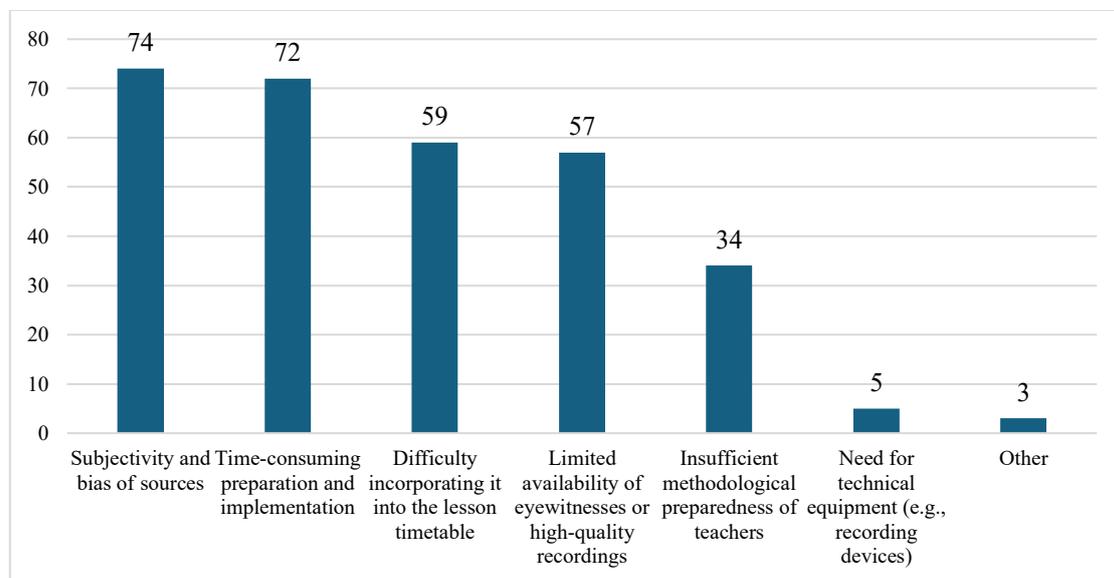


Pre-service teachers identified similar challenges but with a different emphasis. In addition to time demands and the subjectivity of testimonies, they stressed the need for methodological guidance and uncertainty when working with sensitive topics. This emphasis can be interpreted as reflecting their more limited practical experience and the need for clearer methodological frameworks to support classroom application. It also indicates that pre-service teachers attach greater importance to the ethical and emotional dimensions of oral history than in-service teachers.

**Figure 6.** Pre-service history teachers – main limitations of using the oral history method in history lessons (n = 108)

**Note:** The respondents could select multiple options; therefore, the total number of responses exceeds the number of respondents and the percentage total does not equal 100 %.

**Source:** own elaboration



Overall, both in-service and pre-service history teachers hold predominantly positive attitudes towards the oral history method, but their perspectives differ depending on their level of professional experience and their role within the educational process. In-service teachers tend to evaluate the method in terms of real classroom conditions, whereas pre-service teachers focus more on its potential and innovative value. To support broader implementation, it would be advisable to strengthen systematic methodological guidance and to more effectively balance the time, organisational, and ethical aspects when integrating the method into classroom practice.

In connection with these findings, the following part of the analysis examines the conditions shaping the practical application of the method — particularly the role of technical equipment in the implementation of teaching activities.

### 4.3 Conditions for Use and Technical Equipment

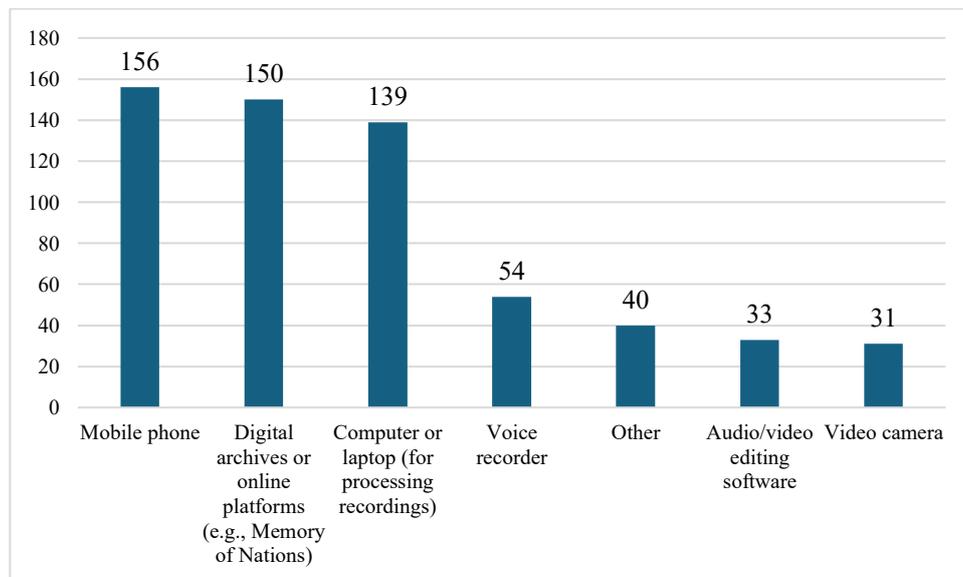
With regard to technical equipment, in-service history teachers most frequently reported using widely available tools that can be easily incorporated into lessons without the need for special preparation. The most commonly mentioned device was the smartphone (51 %), followed by digital archives and online platforms — particularly *Memory of Nations* (49 %) — which represents a key source of authentic sources for teaching modern history. The third most frequently used tool was a computer or laptop (45 %), mainly for processing, editing, and presenting recordings. By contrast, more specialised equipment — such as voice recorders (18 %), editing software (11 %), or video cameras (10 %) — appeared considerably less often in the responses.

The in-service teachers' comments indicate that the primary obstacle is not the technology itself but the time demands and organisational constraints of schools, which make more extensive audiovisual processing of interviews difficult. Many teachers also reported using the method without digital support, for example through a live testimony from eyewitnesses or by working with written transcripts. This confirms that oral history can be effectively implemented even in low-tech environments and that the decisive factor is the didactic approach rather than technology itself.

**Figure 7.** In-service history teachers – technical equipment used when applying the oral history method in history lessons (n = 308)

**Note:** The respondents could select multiple options; therefore, the total number of responses exceeds the number of respondents and the percentage total does not equal 100 %.

**Source:** own elaboration

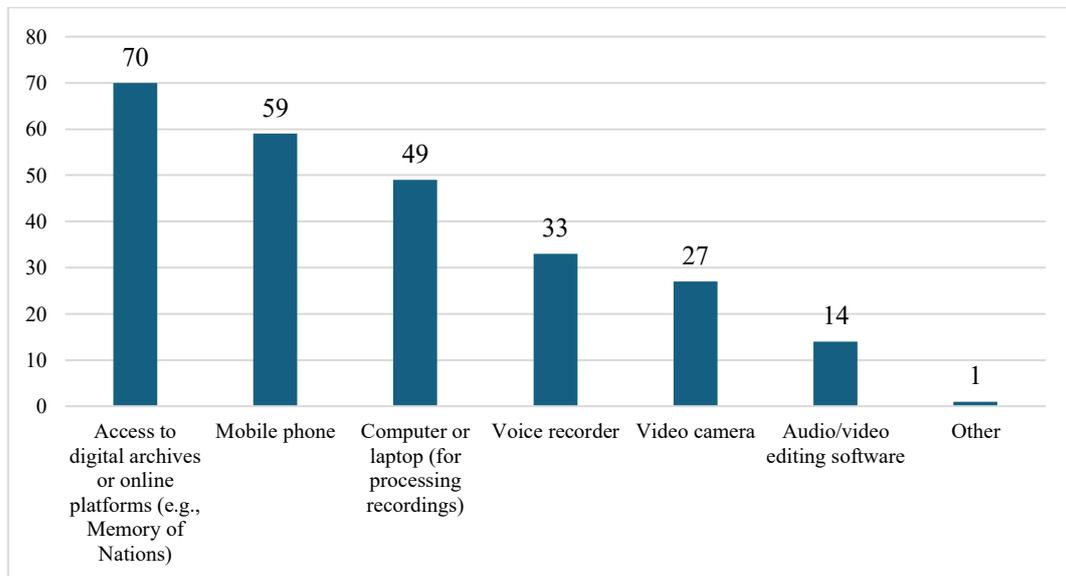


Compared to in-service teachers, pre-service teachers reported a largely similar level of technical equipment but differed in the frequency of using specialised tools. They referred more often to voice recorders, video cameras, and editing software, although not all of them had practical experience with these tools. This difference reflects an “ideal model” of working with oral history typically created at universities based on theoretical preparation, whereas in-service teachers adapt to the real constraints of school practice and prefer tools that do not require advanced technical skills.

**Figure 8.** Pre-service history teachers – technical equipment used when applying the oral history method in history lessons (n = 108)

**Note:** The respondents could select multiple options; therefore, the total number of responses exceeds the number of respondents and the percentage total does not equal 100 %.

**Source:** own elaboration



Overall, the analysis shows that the implementation of the method often depends on individual teacher initiative, particularly in the context of project-based activities, grant-funded projects, or cooperation with memory institutions. Technical equipment therefore represents an important, though not decisive, precondition. A more significant role is played by the availability of methodological support, access to field-tested didactic materials, and opportunities for collaboration with institutions managing archival sources. The method thus retains strong potential even in environments with limited technical equipment, provided that it is supported by adequate preparation, organisational flexibility, and didactic creativity.

#### 4.4 Verification of the Selected Hypotheses

Based on the preceding descriptive analysis, the selected hypotheses were subsequently tested. The aim was to compare in more detail the attitudes and experience of in-service and pre-service history teachers and to examine the relationships between prior educational exposure, the extent of using the method, and the perceived need for methodological support. The hypotheses were chosen from a broader set of tested relationships and were selected for their relevance to the thematic focus of the article. They are presented in the order of the respondent groups: in-service teachers, pre-service teachers, and a comparative analysis of both groups.

### ***Hypothesis H1 (in-service history teachers)***

Hypothesis H1 assumed that teachers who had been introduced to the oral history method during their university studies were more likely to use it in their teaching than those without such experience. This hypothesis was tested using the chi-square test of independence, which confirmed a statistically significant association ( $\chi^2 = 7.457$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $p < .05$ ). **Hypothesis H1 was therefore confirmed.**

The results indicate that early exposure to the method significantly increases the likelihood of its later implementation in teaching practice. Teachers who first encountered the method during their studies tend to integrate it into their lessons more frequently, both in short activities and in the form of project-based or regionally oriented instruction.

### ***Hypothesis H2 (pre-service history teachers)***

Hypothesis H2 focused on pre-service history teachers and examined whether encountering the oral history method already at secondary school influenced the extent of its subsequent use during university training and teaching practice. The chi-square test of independence confirmed a statistically significant difference ( $\chi^2 = 5.602$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $p < .05$ ). **Hypothesis H2 was therefore confirmed.**

The findings show that students who first encountered the method at the secondary level used it more frequently and with greater confidence during their teaching practice. These respondents also reported more often that the method helped students understand history through personal experience and increased their motivation when learning about modern history.

### ***Hypothesis H3 (comparative)***

Hypothesis H3 compared both respondent groups in relation to the perceived need for methodological support when using the oral history method. The chi-square test of independence showed a highly statistically significant difference ( $\chi^2 = 15.19$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $p < .001$ ). **Hypothesis H3 was therefore confirmed.**

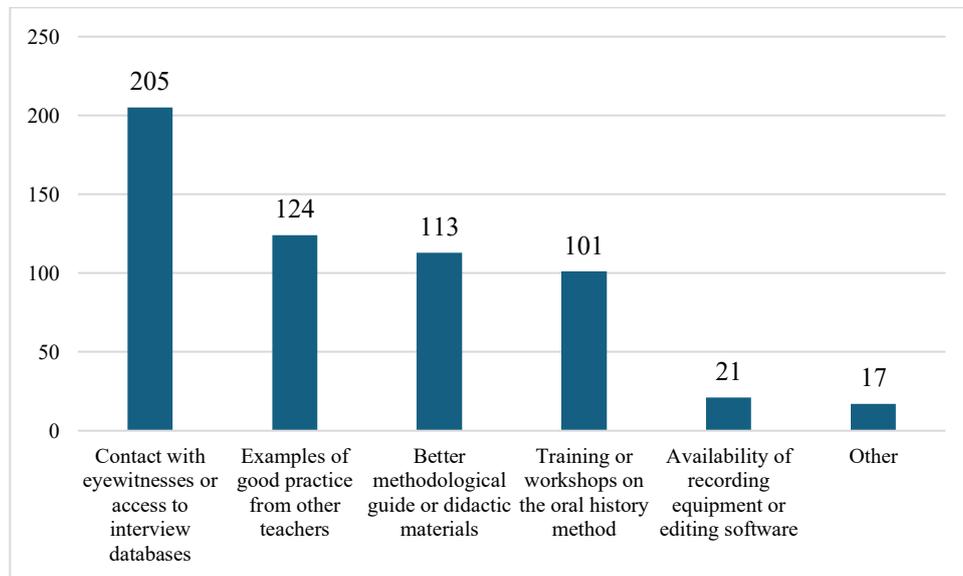
The data indicate that pre-service teachers report a considerably stronger need for methodological materials, practical training, and examples of good practice than in-service teachers. This difference can be interpreted as a consequence of the distinct experiential backgrounds of the two groups: while in-service teachers draw on everyday classroom practice, pre-service teachers operate predominantly within an academic environment where the method is discussed theoretically rather than practiced.

The results of all three hypotheses are consistent with the trends identified in the previous parts of the analysis – particularly the differences between the respondent groups in terms of their experience, the extent of using the method, and the perceived need for methodological support. These relationships are further illustrated in the following graphs:

**Figure 9.** In-service history teachers – resources and tools enabling more effective use of the oral history method in teaching (n = 308)

**Note:** The respondents could select multiple options; therefore, the total number of responses exceeds the number of respondents and the percentage total does not equal 100 %.

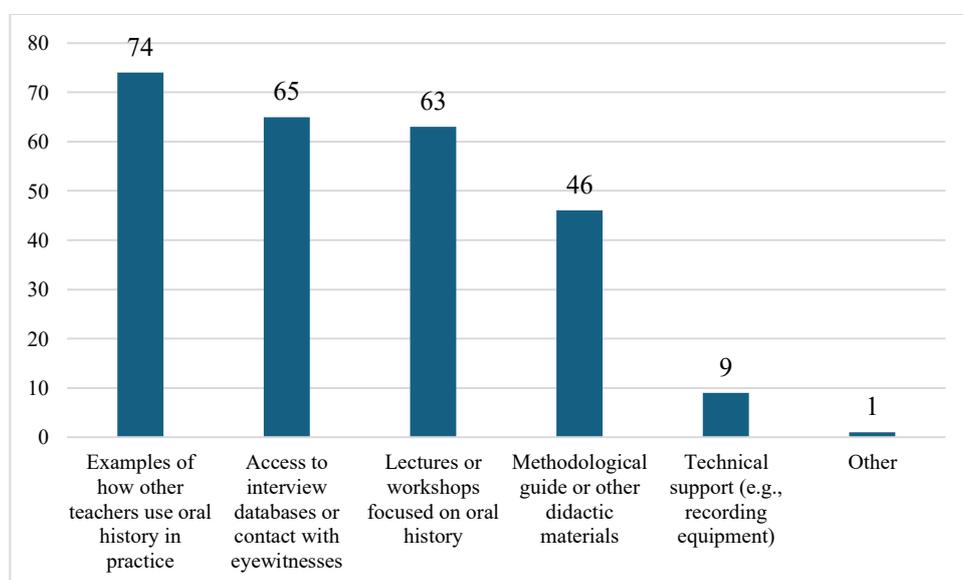
**Source:** own elaboration



**Figure 10.** Pre-service history teachers – resources and tools for better understanding the oral history method during their studies (n = 108)

**Note:** The respondents could select multiple options; therefore, the total number of responses exceeds the number of respondents and the percentage total does not equal 100 %.

**Source:** own elaboration



## 5 Discussion

The results of the questionnaire survey show that the oral history method is relatively well known among history teachers in Czech secondary education, yet it is used predominantly on an occasional basis. Pre-service history teachers most often encounter the method in a theoretical form within university preparation, while their practical experience remains limited. This difference can be explained by both the longer professional experience of in-service teachers and the more limited autonomy of pre-service teachers in choosing didactic approaches.

The confirmed hypotheses H1 and H2 indicate that early exposure – whether gained during university studies or already at secondary-school level – significantly increases the likelihood of subsequent use of the method in teaching practice. This conclusion is consistent with international research that highlights the importance of hands-on training for developing competence in methods based on eyewitness testimony.

The benefits most frequently identified by the respondents – especially making history more relatable through personal stories, enabling direct interaction with eyewitnesses, and fostering critical thinking – correspond to the advantages commonly reported in the literature on oral history in education. At the same time, the respondents identified several significant barriers, particularly time demands, the subjective nature of sources, and limited access to eyewitnesses. In line with hypothesis H3, pre-service teachers expressed a considerably stronger need for methodological support than in-service teachers. This difference reflects not only their more limited practical experience but also points to a challenge for university programmes, which should provide concrete methodological tools, examples of good practice, and opportunities for practising the method in an authentic environment.

The findings further show that technical conditions function as a supportive rather than a decisive factor. Both in-service and pre-service teachers primarily rely on readily available tools (smartphones, computers, digital archives), while specialised technologies are used only marginally. This suggests that the primary barriers to a broader use of the method are organisational, temporal and methodological rather than technological. This interpretation is reinforced by the respondents' open-ended comments as well as by the current emphasis in the revised RVP ZV on inquiry-based learning and work with authentic sources, which, however, require adequate institutional support.

Overall, the results suggest that the effective implementation of oral history in the teaching of modern history depends on a combination of early practical experience, accessible methodological support, and a flexible organisational framework. Integrating the method already at the level of initial teacher education – including opportunities to conduct interviews, work with recordings, and interpret them didactically – can significantly increase its later classroom use.

A broader perspective on the findings indicates that the use of oral history is not merely a matter of individual teacher motivation, but also one of systemic conditions and institutional support. The quantitative data show that where the method is introduced within structured preparation and accompanied by methodological guidance, its use is more frequent and reflective. This trend is consistent with the curriculum changes in the revised RVP ZV, which emphasise inquiry-based learning, the use of authentic sources, and the development of historical thinking.

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to a broader discussion on the current trends in history didactics in a time of digitalisation and the growing role of artificial

intelligence. Oral history, grounded in human experience and dialogue, serves as a counterbalance to the automated and fragmented nature of information in the digital age. It enables students to perceive history in both their personal and societal dimensions and supports the development of empathy alongside a critical reflection on the past.

From a practical perspective, the findings confirm the need to strengthen hands-on training already during university studies. Pre-service teachers should have opportunities to conduct and analyse interviews with eyewitnesses and to adapt them for didactic use. Such experience increases confidence in subsequent teaching practice and fosters motivation for a long-term application of the method. University programmes could therefore complement theoretical instruction with project-based learning and cooperation with memory institutions.

At the systemic level, it would be beneficial for the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, in cooperation with universities and memory institutions, to support the creation of a methodological portal and a database of eyewitness interviews that would offer easily accessible, peer-reviewed, and didactically applicable materials. Inspiration may be drawn from German models of hybrid textbooks and online platforms that combine printed and digital resources.

A further step could involve the institutional recognition of oral history as a fully-fledged didactic method within continuing teacher education. Targeted courses and workshops could provide methodological guidance, ethical frameworks, and opportunities for sharing experience. Such measures would strengthen the professional community and contribute to the long-term integration of the method in school practice.

For future research, there is potential for longitudinal studies examining the impact of oral history on students' historical consciousness and civic competencies, as well as for comparative studies investigating differences between schools that use the method systematically and those in which it remains marginal.

Oral history thus represents not only an innovative didactic tool but also a means of fostering democratic culture and intergenerational understanding. Its broader integration into education requires the alignment of methodological preparation, systemic support, and practical experience – a synergy that enables pedagogical innovation to be combined with long-term continuity in history education.

However, it is also important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The sample size, particularly for pre-service teachers, restricts the generalisability of the findings. Moreover, the research focused exclusively on qualified history teachers, excluding educators of related subjects (e.g., Czech language and literature, civics), who may also work with the method. Future research could therefore include a broader group of teachers and explore the use of oral history in a cross-curricular context, which would make it possible to capture a wider range of pedagogical approaches and didactic connections.

The summary of these findings forms the basis for recommendations for educational practice, which are presented in the concluding section of the article.

## **6 Conclusion**

The results of the research confirmed that both in-service and pre-service history teachers in the Czech Republic perceived the oral history method as a meaningful and beneficial didactic tool, although in practice it was still used only occasionally and in a rather unsystematic way. The confirmed hypotheses show that early hands-on experience – gained

either during university studies or already at the secondary-school level – significantly increases the likelihood of its later use in teaching.

The barriers identified concern primarily the time demands, limited access to eyewitnesses, and the lack of methodological support. These obstacles can largely be addressed through appropriate methodological guidance and stronger cooperation between schools and memory institutions. The need for systematic support is particularly visible among pre-service teachers, suggesting that university training should more closely combine theoretical foundations with authentic hands-on practice.

It is, however, important to acknowledge the limitations of the research, especially the sample size of pre-service teachers and the focus exclusively on qualified history teachers. Nevertheless, the findings offer valuable insight into current practice and can serve as a basis for further empirical research as well as for innovation in history education.

Recommendations for educational practice:

- 1) Integrate practical training in the oral history method into initial teacher education programmes, including work with eyewitnesses, conducting interviews, and using recording equipment.
- 2) Develop easily accessible methodological materials and databases of interviews to support teachers in the rapid and pedagogically meaningful integration of the method into lessons.
- 3) Strengthen cooperation between schools and memory institutions (archives, museums, NGOs) and expand opportunities for direct contact with eyewitnesses.
- 4) Enhance the space for project-based and inquiry-based learning within school curricula so that the method is not perceived merely as a supplement, but as a natural component of modern history teaching.

The oral history method has the potential not only to enrich history education through authentic sources and to foster critical thinking, but also to promote intergenerational dialogue and civic culture. Its systematic integration can help ensure that history teaching is not reduced to the transmission of facts, but becomes a means of deeper understanding of human experience in both past and present. This potential is fully aligned with the revised RVP ZV, which prioritises the use of authentic sources, inquiry-based approaches, and the strengthening of civic education.

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