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**DEMYSTIFYING TRENDS IN PHARMACIST LICENSURE EXAM: SEARCH FOR A PHENOMENOLOGICALLY-BASED BLUEPRINT FOR STEADY TOP PERFORMANCE**

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**Background** The University of the Immaculate Conception (UIC) Pharmacy Program had enjoyed being the country's top performing Pharmacy school from 1957 to 2001, harboring 100% passing rate 22 times and producing at least 17 1st to 5th placers in the government-administered pharmacist licensure exam (PLE). However, from 2002 to date, the Program suffered flickering PLE performance with lowest rating of 12.5 % in 2006 while contrastingly producing a First Placer in 2015.

**Objectives** The purpose of this phenomenologically-based action research is to explore the lived experiences of graduates and teachers who experienced the flickering PLE performance of the Program, to construct significant themes with appreciable impact to PLE performances, to form as basis for an action plan for the sustainability of the Program as top performing pharmacy school in the country.

**Methods** The data were gathered by triangulation employing document analysis, interviews and focus group discussions involving purposively chosen participants composed of 12 faculty and 15 graduates of the Program based on predefined inclusion/exclusion criteria.

**Result** Data analysis revealed the Program's laboratory facilities as its best feature while certain issues in the instruction, faculty, students and administrative aspects emerged recurring. Hence the following themes were constructed (1) Effective learning is founded on quality instructional pedagogy, (2) Learners construct their own understanding, which is enhanced by holistic

interactions amongst learning communities, and (3) A balance between closed- and open- system views of administrative styles is necessary in promoting desired worker behaviors and actions. **Conclusion** Based on these themes, a 5-year development action plan aimed to sustain PLE top performance was formulated encompassing instruction materials and delivery, faculty development, guidance services and student evaluation.