Transforming A New Value In Where Mickey Mouse Comes From

A week before I went to Michigan State University (MSU), I spent my time in my hometown with my family. In that time, my daughter always asked me to accompany her to the bedroom. It seems that she knew that I would leave her for studying in United States (US) at least for two years. On August 30th, 2011, my family went with me to Yogyakarta International Airport, where I boarded the Garuda Indonesia for Singapore and transferred to United Airlines. I could not differentiate between feeling happy and sad. However, when I had to leave my daughter and kiss her, and she said, “Where are you going Dad? Who will play with me? Who will take me on school? Who will accompany me to go to bed?” I could not say anything and my tears were running down my face. Saying good-bye to my family was very hard for me, but I had no other choice.

After around two days in the plane, I arrived to East Lansing. The first thing that I had to do was buy an international phone card to call my family. Then, I went to the store near my apartment in Spartan Village. Unfortunately, I had trouble with my English; the guy who served me in the store did not understand what I said. He asked me to bring my friend with me to talk to him. After I invited my friend and got the international phone card, I called my wife and my daughter. They were very happy to hear that I had a nice long trip to get to US. My wife told me that my daughter always asked about me. “Where is my dad, Mom?” said my daughter to my wife after she came back from school. “Your Dad is in America,” answered my wife. “Where is that?” my
daughter continued to ask. “It is a place where Mickey Mouse comes from.” My wife tried to explain to my daughter.

The next day, I spent all day walking around East Lansing with my Indonesian fellow. I explored its shopping center, downtown, restaurant, and of course, the university. MSU has a large campus, many buildings, and some intramural buildings that still make me confused. Because of its massive university, I spent two hours to get from MSU Union to Natural Resources Building in which I had an appointment with my advisor to greet each other.

While I visited my advisor in the first time, I was excited because he is very friendly and kind so that there was no gap between us to discuss my studying. This relationship is uncommon in my country’s academic style because in Indonesia a student cannot challenge the advisor, but here, I freely express my idea and opinion. Moreover, my advisor only gave advice in planning my study; I had to choose by myself about my specialization and also my research topic. He said that in America, the value of independence is a priority; every one can decide his/her own choice. It is true that living in US is different than in my home country, here, people highly recognize the importance of being independent.

The value of independence has changed my perspective in facing life. Being independent leads me to be capable in everything. For example, in Indonesia, when we go to the store and we have a lot of stuff, we can ask the porter to bring our bag and just call the taxi to take us home. In contrast, in the US, I cannot do this anymore, I have to take bus and bring the stuff by myself. One day, I went to Meijer Okemos, I took all the things that I needed for a month because I was used to having a stock of food in my
refrigerator and food cupboard. After a while, my pushcart was full and all of my need had already been fulfilled so I went to cashier to pay for my groceries. While I had put my items in conveyer in cashier table, the cashier suddenly shot me, “Hey man, please put your bag into your pushcart.” I had learnt that after the cashier scans the item I should put our groceries out by myself. After the cashier had finished his job, he gave me a receipt and I saw the receipt that is printed my items are $500.00. Wow it was so expensive to buy something in the US, next time I have to be efficient in shopping so that I do not spend a lot of money anymore. Then, I went home by bus and I was confused how to bring all of my stuff from here to the home by bus. Finally, with a hard effort I could get home and it was very tiring. From that moment, I got lessen learn to be an independent person to get anything; I cannot depend on other people anymore. The value of independence leads me to be stronger and also mature in thinking because I have to decide and to take the consequences. Think first before you talk or act.

Besides academic class, I encourage myself to actively participate in extracurricular program in MSU, and then I join a Tae Kwon Do club. One day, the instructor gave the members of the club about the life philosophy that has same value with fighting. He said that life is the same as a fighting, if we are not aggressive, then we will not win the competition. Those who cannot compete with other will lose and fail in his/her life. That moment gave me a spirit to survive and to struggle in every moment and every opportunity.

Even life is full of competition but as a human we need to balance our life. Struggling to achieve our studying, career, and other professional achievement almost takes our time. As a human we have to take care to our community. This semester, I get
a great opportunity to dedicate my self as a volunteer to help senior citizens that are placed in Whitehills Health Center. Even though at the beginning of this program, I felt that this program would disturb my studying time, but after I’ve done for 6 hours, I obtained the other life value of America to be strong. This experience was really meaningful for me since in the middle of mid exam and a lot of assignments, I had to try hard to fulfill my commitment spending at least 3 hours to dedicate my self to the community of East Lansing.

While I was at health center, I helped and supported my supervisor job to do some activities with senior citizen. During my service learning, I had opportunity to share my country’s culture and value. I told to them that they are very lucky living in the developed world like US because in my country, the health care system does not work very well like here. The program in this center is very excellent for them; they get some exercises that stimulate their physical and intellectual activities. I was wonder that some of the senior citizens still have motivation to do energetic exercise; they showed me that they are still able to play with me. It has inspired me to use time optimally when I am still young with high energy. In addition, my supervisor also asked me to help her in serving and assisting their lunch. I was personally very happy because I could help and serve the people who really need my assistance.

Living at the US with a new academic and community environment is really challenging for an international student like me. Dealing with a new life value gives me a benefit for my personal and professional development. Therefore, someday I will invite my family to join with me so that they will acquire a different perspective to win in life by transforming a new value in where Mickey Mouse comes from.