Multiple-Devices-Process Integrated Scheduling Algorithm with Time-Selective Strategy for Process Sequence

Xiaohuan Zhang, Dan Zhang, Zhen Wang, and Yu Xin

1College of Computer Science and Technology, Huizhou University, Huizhou 516007, China
2Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Ningbo University, Ningbo 315211, China

Correspondence should be addressed to Xiaohuan Zhang; zhangxiaohuan@hzu.edu.cn

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1. Introduction

Scheduling, as a key factor affecting the production efficiency of enterprises, has always been a hot issue studied by scholars. Efficient scheduling optimization algorithm can maximize production efficiency and help enterprises achieve higher benefits [1]. At present, there are two main research directions in this field, namely, single processing (assembly) scheduling and integrated scheduling. Typical representatives of the former scheduling are job-shop and flow-shop scheduling [2]. This type of processing and assembly is common in mass production. The reason is the large quantity of the ordered products. The centralized production of disassembling them into work pieces will generate a large amount of inventory, and then the inventory will be assembled. In this way, synchronous processing and assembly can shorten the production cycle.

Currently, there are many research achievements in this direction, and more advanced methods include genetic algorithm [3], tabu search [4], neural network [5], heuristic algorithm [6], particle swarm optimization [7], bionics algorithm [8], and various hybrid algorithms [9]. With the improvement of people’s living standards, today’s consumers increasingly pursue personalized products. Personalized product orders are often single small batch orders, which only produce a small amount of inventory or even zero inventories in the production process.

As a result, the above production methods will no longer be dominant but will separate the internal relationship between processing activities and assembly activities. The integrated scheduling problem makes up for this defect and provides practical solutions for single small batch production [10]. The main scheduling idea is that during the scheduling process, the assembly can be carried out as long as the work piece is finished and the assembly conditions are satisfied. The assembly activity is carried out synchronously with the ongoing processing activity, so as to effectively improve the production efficiency and reduce internal
consumption [11]. The most advanced research achievements in this field include the integrated scheduling algorithm for multiple-devices-process.

The content of this paper is the scheduling problem of Multiple-Devices-Process in the integrated scheduling problem. In the actual manufacturing process, some processes need to be processed by multiple equipment. This paper will study this problem. At present, the research on this problem is in its infancy, puts forward this problem, and gives solutions for the first time. In this method, the critical path method and priority scheduling the Multiple-Devices-Process method are adopted to determine the process scheduling sequence, and the first adaptive strategy is applied to determine the scheduling time of the process. The disadvantages are as follows: (1) Paying too much attention to the serial processing of the process, not considering the parallel processing between parallel processes. (2) The influence of the first processing step on the second processing step is ignored, resulting in poor tightness between serial processes and poor parallelism between parallel processes, which ultimately affects the product scheduling result.

In order to solve the above problems, a Multiple-Devices-Process Integrated Scheduling Algorithm with Selecting Time for Process Sequence is proposed (MDOI-SAWSTFFPS). The Multiple-Devices-Process sequencing strategy is proposed. It can determine the scheduling sequence of the process and improve the tightness between serial processes. This paper presents a method to determine the quasiseconding time point of the Multiple-Devices-Process, the time-selective strategy of Multiple-Devices-Process, and the time-selective adjustment strategy of Multiple-Devices-Process so that the first and the second processing processes cooperate with each other, and the purpose of improving the tightness of the serial process and the parallelism of the parallel processes is achieved, so as to shorten the product processing time.

2. Problem Description and Analysis

The product processing technology of the multidevices scheduling problem is shown as a tree structure. The node in the tree represents the working procedure of the product, the directed edge represents the partial order relation of the working procedure processing order, the root node represents the last working procedure in the product, and the finished processing of the root node indicates the finished processing of the product. The following constraints must be met for the scheduling problem of Multiple-Devices-Process:

1. Each process must strictly comply with the agreed partial order relationship in the processing tree.
2. Each equipment can only process one process at any time, and the processing process can not be interrupted.
3. There are no devices with the same function in the device set.
4. There are multiequipment processes in the process set in which there are several related types of equipment working together. The multidevices process refers to the process that requires multiple equipment to cooperate with each other in a process. The processing time of multiple equipment is the same, and the processing start time and the processing end time are the same.
5. A process can only be processed if and only if all the preceding processes are in the finished state (or no prior process).
6. The difference between the end time of the latest processing step and the beginning time of the earliest processing step is the total processing time of the product.

3. Strategy Design

3.1. Multiple-Devices-Process Sequencing Strategy. The design of this strategy is similar to that of the common equipment process sequence sequencing strategy. The difference between the two strategies is that the multidevices process sequencing strategy contains multidevices processes and needs to be discussed separately. Since the start time, end time, and processing time of these processes are the same, they can be regarded as the same process, and they are arranged together in no particular order [12]. For example, the product process tree is shown in Figure 1, which contains 7 processes. First, the path length of 3 leaf nodes is calculated, and the results are A2:35, A6:70, and A7:80. Therefore, the process sequence 1 is A1, A3, A5, and A7. Remove the process in the first process sequence from the process tree, and the remaining leaf node is A2, A6. The path length is calculated, respectively, and the results are A2:20 and A6:35. Therefore, the second process sequence is A4, A6. Remove the process in the second process sequence from the process tree, and the remaining leaf node is A2. Since it is the last process sequence, there is no need to calculate its path length, and the upper process of the third process sequence is directly determined as A2.

A simplified version of the proposed algorithm can be described as follows:

Step 1: i = 0.
Step 2: calculate the path length of existing leaf nodes in the reverse process tree, respectively.
Step 3: i++.
Step 4: select the leaf node W with the longest path.
Step 5: if process W is not unique, select the process Q with the highest number of sequences on its path.
Step 6: if process Q is not unique, select the process O with the smallest difference between the number of layers of the process and the number of layers of the root node in the original processing tree.
Step 7: if process O is not unique, select the process P with the maximum total processing time of all preceding processes of each process on its path.
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Step 8: the sequence formed by all the processes on the path of process $P$ is denoted as process sequence $I$.

Step 9: starting from process $P$, all the processes on process sequence $I$ are successively pushed into $S$, followed by bomb stack $S$, and the resulting processes are successively stored in queue $Qu$.

Step 10: remove the process in queue $Qu$ from the process tree.

Step 11: judge whether the current process tree is empty or not. Turn step 2 and turn step 12.

Step 12: exit.

3.2. Determination of Quasischeduling Time Points of Multiple-Devices-Process. Set the current scheduling process as process $A$, the finishing time of its pretightening process is $T$. Starting from point $T$ on its processing equipment, the processing end time point of each scheduled process is found as the “quasischeduling time point” of process $A$ and added to the “quasischeduling time point” set.

The determination of quasischeduling time point of Multiple-Devices-Process needs to consider the processing equipment of each parallel subprocess separately. The set of quasischeduled time points of a Multiple-Devices-Process is the union of all parallel subprocesses on its processing equipment. For example, there are two parallel subprocesses in processes $A$, $A_1$, and $A_2$, which are processed on different processing equipment, respectively. The “quasischeduling time point” set of $A_1$ is $Ta_1 = \{T_1, T_2, T_3\}$. The “quasischeduling time points” set of $A_2$ is $Ta_2 = \{T_4, T_5\}$. The set of “quasischeduling time points” of procedure $A$ is $tA = ta_1 \cup ta_2$.

3.3. Time-Selective Strategy of Multiple-Devices-Process. The time-selective strategy of Multiple-Devices-Process schedules each parallel subprocess separately at each time point in the process’s “quasischeduled time points” set. In the scheduling process, it should be noted that the first quasischeduling time point is the end time of the pretight process in the processing process tree of this process. There are two situations at this time point, as illustrated below.

As shown in Figure 2, $Wi$ is a Multiple-Devices-Process, which contains two parallel subprocesses $Wi_1$ and $Wi_2$.

According to the partial order relationship in the process tree, the start time of process $Wi_1$ and $Wi_2$ should be consistent and greater than or equal to the end time $T_1$ of the process which tightening front of process $A$ in the process tree. The processing equipment of process $Wi_1$ is $M_2$, and the processing equipment of process $Wi_2$ is $M_1$. At this time, there are the following two conditions on the processing equipment of each parallel subprocedure at time $T_1$.

Situation 1: $T_1$ in Figure 2(a) is the end time of the scheduled process $B$ or blank time. At this point, $T_1$ is taken as the first “quasischeduling time point” of process $Wi$, so that $Wi_1$ starts processing on $M_2$ at time $T_1$, and $Wi_2$ starts processing on $M_1$ at time $T_1$.

Situation 2: $T_1$ in Figure 2(b) is the processing time of the scheduled procedures $B$ and $C$. In order to avoid conflict, there are two solutions. One is processes $B$ and $C$ do not move. Select $T_3$, the maximum end time of steps $B$ and $C$, as the first “quasischeduling time point” of step $Wi$. Second, $T_1$ is selected as the first “quasischeduling time point” of process $Wi$, and process $B$ is adjusted to the back of process $Wi_1$, and process $C$ is adjusted to the back of process $Wi_2$. As shown in Figure 3, it is obvious that $Wi$ is scheduled according to the second processing mode, and the resulting Multiple-Devices-Process trial scheduling scheme set will contain the case of $Wi$ scheduled according to the first processing mode. To enlarge the problem solution space, the second processing method is selected to schedule $Wi$.

A simplified version of the proposed time-selective strategy of the Multiple-Devices-Process algorithm can be described as follows:

Step 1: queue a process from queue $Qu$ and set to process $A$.

Step 2: suppose the end time of the tight preprocess of procedure $A$ is $T$.

Step 3: determine if the process is an ordinary process or a Multiple-Devices-Process. If the ordinary process, go to 4. If the Multiple-Devices-Process, go to 5.

Step 4: start from point $T$ on the processing equipment of process $A$, find the finishing time point of each

Figure 1: A product process tree with Multiple-Devices-Process.
scheduled process as the “quasischeduling time point” of process $A$, and add it into the “quasischeduling time point” set.

Step 5: starting from point $T$ on several parallel processing equipment of process $A$, the processing end time point of each scheduled process on each parallel processing equipment is found to be the “quasischeduling time point” of process $A$ and added to the “quasischeduling time point” set.

Step 6: judge whether the set of “quasischeduling time points” is empty, not for idling to 7, for idling to 15.

Step 7: take a time point $T$ from the set of “quasischeduled time points,” and judge whether $T$ point is the first “quasischeduled time point,” if it goes to 8, if not to 11.

Step 8: if process $A$ is an ordinary process, go to 9. If process $A$ is a Multiple-Devices-Process, go to 10.

Step 9: determine whether process $A$ has affected the scheduled process on the current equipment. If the affected process is added to the list of scheduled processes of the equipment, the position is after process $A$ and goes to 12.

Step 10: judge whether each parallel subprocess of Multiple-Devices-Process $A$ has affected the scheduled process on the current device. If the affected procedure is added to the scheduled process chain list of each parallel subprocess equipment, the position is after process $A$ and then goes to 13.

Step 11: if process $A$ is an ordinary process, go to 12. If process $A$ is a multiple-devices-process, go to 13.

Step 12: take $T$ as the start time of process $A$ to conduct trial scheduling of process $A$ and adjust the processes affected by the scheduling of process $A$, so as to produce the trial scheduling scheme generated by the scheduling of process $A$ at the “quasischeduling time point,” and add the trial scheduling scheme into the set of trial scheduling schemes of process $A$ and turn it to 10.

Step 13: take $T$ as the start time of each parallel subprocess in process $A$, and then conduct trial scheduling for each subprocess, and adjust the processes affected by each parallel subprocess of the scheduling process $A$ (in accordance with section 3.4). The trial scheduling scheme of process $A$ at the quasischeduling time point is generated; the trial scheduling scheme is added to the trial scheduling scheme set of Process $A$. 

**Figure 2:** Scheduling analysis at the first quasischeduling time point.

**Figure 3:** A schematic diagram of the backshift of the process affected by scheduling at the first “quasischeduling time point.”
Step 14: delete this time point in the quasischeduling time point collection and go to 6.
Step 15: exit.

3.4. Time-Selective Adjustment Strategy of Multiple-Devices-Process. The selection of “quasischeduling time point” only considers the processing order between processes, without considering whether the scheduling of the process will affect the scheduled process on the equipment. Therefore, after the scheduling process, it is necessary to check the scheduled process that may be affected by it. When the processing completion time of the scheduling process is greater than the processing start time of the subsequent process on the same equipment or the processing start time of the process in the process tree, the time-selective adjustment strategy shall be started. For Multiple-Devices-Process, all parallel subprocesses need to be checked separately. Considering the situation of the first quasischeduling time point, as shown in Figure 4(a), when scheduling process W1, the processes affected are: Process B, Process D, Process E, and Process F. Wherein, when process B determines the first quasischeduling time point, its equipment is processing process, which has been processed in the design of time-selective scheduling strategy. The method is to arrange it in the chain list of processed processes of the equipment, and the position is after process W1. To adjust process B will affect the work process D on the device after tight; to adjust process D will affect the work process E on the device after tight, and work process F after tight in the process tree, by the same token, the scheduling process W1 affected by the process are process C, working process, G/I and H. Consider the case that it is not the first quasischeduling time point, as shown in Figure 4(b), when scheduling process W1; the processes affected are Process D, Process E, and Process F. When scheduling process W1, the processes affected are Process C, Process I, and Process H. To sum up, the time-selective adjustment strategy considers two situations when adjusting a process: one is the posttightening process on the processing equipment of the scheduling process. The other is the posttightening process on the equipment of the adjusted technology tree.

A simplified version of the proposed Multiple-Devices-Process timing adjustment strategy algorithm can be described as follows:

Step 1: queue all parallel subprocesses of the current Multiple-Devices-Process in sequence into Aqu.
Step 2: queue Aqu and store the results in W.
Step 3: judge whether W is empty, do not idle to 4, otherwise go to 10.
Step 4: suppose there are k post-tight processes in w’s process tree, n = 1.
Step 5: judge whether n > k is true. If it is true, go to 8. If not, go to 6.
Step 6: judge whether the processing completion time of W is greater than the processing start time of process wn after the tight process in the process tree (the starting time of the unscheduled process is +∞ by default), if to 7, otherwise to 8.
Step 7: take the machining end time of w as the start time of wn, and put wn into the team Aqu, n++.
Step 8: determine whether w has tight postprocess WM on the chain list of scheduled processes of its processing equipment and the completion time of W is greater than the start time of WM. If it is 9, otherwise it is 2.
Step 9: take the end time of W as the start time of WM, enter WM into Aqu, and turn it to 2.
Step 10: after the adjustment, calculate the total processing time of the current scheme, exit.

A simplified version of the proposed multiple-devices-process integrated scheduling algorithm with time-selective for process sequence can be described as follows:

Step 1: queue all parallel subprocesses of the current Multiple-Devices-Process in sequence into Aqu.
Step 2: queue Aqu and store the results in W.
Step 3: judge whether W is empty, do not idle to 4, otherwise go to 10.
Step 4: suppose there are k post-tight processes in w’s process tree, n = 1.
Step 5: judge whether n > k is true. If it is true, go to 8. If not, go to 6.
Step 6: judge whether the processing completion time of W is greater than the processing start time of process wn after the tight process in the process tree (the starting time of the unscheduled process is +∞ by default), if to 7, otherwise to 8.
Step 7: take the machining end time of w as the start time of wn, and put wn into the team Aqu, n++.
Step 8: determine whether w has tight postprocess WM on the chain list of scheduled processes of its processing equipment and the completion time of W is greater than the start time of WM. If it is 9, otherwise it is 2.
Step 9: take the end time of W as the start time of WM, enter WM into Aqu, and turn it to 2.
Step 10: after the adjustment, calculate the total processing time of the current scheme, exit.

4. Example Analysis

In order to facilitate to the reader to understand the algorithm, the following is an example analysis. Product A is shown in Figure 5, and its reverse process tree is shown in
Figure 6 where each processing node represents a processing process, which is divided into ordinary processes and Multiple-Devices-Process. Such as A28/M1/20, which means that the process name is A28, and it is processed on equipment M1, which is an ordinary process and the processing time is 20. A17/M2M4/20 means that the process name is A17, which needs to be processed on the equipment M2 and M4 at the same time, and it is a Multiple-Devices-Process. According to the algorithm proposed in this paper, the product processing process tree is shown in Figure 6. The scheduling process is shown in Table 1, and the total processing time of product A is 265. The result of scheduling product A is shown in Figures 7 and 8. Meanwhile, the total processing time of scheduling product A according to the algorithm proposed in [12] is 275, and the result of scheduling final product A is shown in Figure 9.

5. Experimental Results and Analysis

To verify the effectiveness of the proposed algorithm, four sets of data were randomly generated, with 50 products in each set. The parameters of the products were randomly generated. The software used on the experimental platform is Windows 10, 64 bit, GCC5.5, and the hardware of the experimental platform is an Intel Core I7-860 processor with 32 GB of memory. Five groups of experiments were designed as follows: Figure 10 is a comparison of the total elapsed processing time when the number of multidevices is 2 for the two algorithms, Figure 11 is a comparison of the total elapsed processing time when the number of multidevices is 3 for the two algorithms, Figure 12 is a comparison of the total elapsed processing time when the number of multidevices is 5 for the two
Figure 6: The reverse product processing tree.

Table 1: The scheduling process of the algorithm scheduling product A in this paper.

| Id | Device | Quasischeduling time points | Total processing time of trial scheduling scheme | Determine the scheduling time point | Scheduling time points for each process in the current scheme |
|----|--------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| A28 | M1     | ——                          | ——                                           | 0                                | A28:0                                                        |
| A26 | M4     | ——                          | ——                                           | 20                               | A26:20                                                       |
| A23 | M124   | ——                          | ——                                           | 40                               | A23:40                                                       |
| A18 | M3     | ——                          | ——                                           | 70                               | A18:70                                                       |
| A13 | M4     | ——                          | ——                                           | 95                               | A13:95                                                       |
| A8  | M134   | ——                          | ——                                           | 125                              | A8:125                                                       |
| A6  | M2     | ——                          | ——                                           | 155                              | A6:155                                                       |
| A2  | M4     | ——                          | ——                                           | 175                              | A2:175                                                       |
| A27 | M2     | 20|70|125|175 | 205|205|205|205 | 20                      | A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20 |
| A25 | M1M4   | 35|70|95|125|155|205 | 220|205|220|220|205 | 225 | 70                      | A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20 |
| A20 | M1M3   | 90|95|155  | 250|205|205 | 225 | 225 | 95                      | A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20 |
| A14 | M1M3   | 120|155 | 225|205 | 225 | 225 | 225 | 225 | 155                     | A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20 |
| A9  | M2     | 180  | 205  | 180  | 180  | 180  | 180  | 180  | 180                     | A2:180, A2:180, A2:180, A2:180, A2:180, A2:180, A2:180, A2:180, A2:180, A2:180 |
| A21 | M3     | 40|95|120|155|180 | 205|215|215|220|205 | 40                      | A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20, A2:20 |
| A16 | M3     | 55|95|120|155|180 | 210|220|220|225|205 | 180                     | A2:180, A2:180, A2:180, A2:180, A2:180, A2:180, A2:180, A2:180, A2:180, A2:180 |

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| Id | Device | Quasischeduling time points | Total processing time of trial scheduling scheme | Determine the scheduling time point | Scheduling time points for each process in the current scheme |
|----|--------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| A10 | M2     | 200|205 | 250|230 | 205 |
| A7  | M1     | 125|155|180 | 245|245|230 | 180 |
| A3  | M2M3   | 205|230 | 250|250 | 205 |
| A1  | M1     | 225 | 250 | 225 |
| A17 | M2M4   | 55|70|90|120|170|220|240|280|285|270|265|265 | 90 |
| A11 | M4     | 110|140|170|220|265|265|240|240|240|255 | 210 |
| A4  | M4     | 210|220 | 265|265 |
| A24 | M3     | 35|55|95|120|170|195|215|240 | 35 |
| A19 | M1     | 90|120|170|195|255 | 265|265|285|275|265 | 90 |
| A15 | M2     | 135|140|190|220|240|265 | 310|265|280|285|285 | 140 |
| A5  | M3     | 170|195|215|240 | 285|280|280|265 | 240 |
| A22 | M1     | 40|70|90|110|135|170|195|210|255 | 280|280|275|275|275|275|270 | 210 |
| A12 | M4     | 95|110|140|170|190|230|260 | 285|280|280|265|265|275|275 | 170 |
Figure 7: Scheduling results of the time-selective strategy of Multiple-Devices-Process.

Figure 8: Reverse scheduling results of the time-selective strategy of Multiple-Devices-Process.

Figure 9: Scheduling results of the reverse multidevice first adaptation algorithm.

Figure 10: Comparison of the total elapsed processing time when the number of multiequipments is 2 for the two algorithms.
Figure 11: Comparison of the total elapsed processing time when the number of multiequipments is 3 for the two algorithms.

Figure 12: Comparison of the total elapsed processing time when the number of multiequipments is 5 for the two algorithms.
Figure 13: Comparison of the total elapsed processing time when the number of multiequipments is 10 for the two algorithms.

Figure 14: Comparison of the average elapsed processing time for the two algorithms.
algorithms, Figure 13 is a comparison of the total elapsed processing time when the number of multidevices is 10 for the two algorithms, and Figure 14 is a comparison of the average elapsed processing time for the two algorithms.

6. Conclusion

On the basis of ensuring parallel processing, the Multiple-Devices-Process sequencing strategy improves the tightness between serial processes and shortens the product completion time. The time-selective strategy of Multiple-Devices-Process and the time-selective adjustment strategy of Multiple-Devices-Process to make the current scheduling process has to cooperate with each other, to make the current partial product processing always take the smallest scheduling scheme, further shortening the product completion time, and when the scheme of minimum total available not only chooses the plan of process over time are the first, to further improve the possibility of parallel processing in the sequence after work. The scheduling results are superior to the existing Multiple-Devices-Process integrated scheduling algorithms. The introduction of a backtracking strategy to improve the accuracy of the algorithm may be the next direction of work, and it is intended to solve the problem of the multidevices process in distributed manufacturing.

Data Availability

The raw/processed data required to reproduce these findings cannot be shared at this time as the data also form part of an ongoing study.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this study.

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