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**Flow and open shop scheduling on two  
machines with transportation times and  
machine-independent processing times in NP-hard**

di

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# Flow and open shop scheduling on two machines with transportation times and machine-independent processing times is NP-hard

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## Abstract

We consider non-preemptive flow-shop and open-shop with two machines and with an additional constraint requiring a minimum time lag between the processing of the two operation of a job. This time lag represent a transportation time needed to move a job from one machine to an other. The objective function is to minimize the maximum completion time of the operations. We show that both problems are strongly NP-hard even when both operations of a same job has identical processing time.

**Key words:** scheduling, flow-shop, open-shop, complexity.

## 1 Introduction

We consider the *flow-shop* and the *open-shop* scheduling problem. In the flow-shop  $m$  machines and  $n$  jobs are given. Each job consists of  $m$  operations each of which has a given processing time and has to be performed on a specific machine. The  $i$ -th operation of a job must start after the completion of operation  $i - 1$ . Two operations on the same machine cannot be performed at the same time. In the open-shop the order in which the operations from a same job are performed is immaterial. It is only required that the two operations are not executed at the same time. The objective function, for both problems, is to minimize the *makespan* i.e. the maximum completion time of an operation. Following the standard notation introduced in Graham et al. [1979] the flow-shop is denoted by  $F||C_{max}$  and the open-shop by  $O||C_{max}$ . When the number of machines is fixed the above notations become  $Fm||C_{max}$  and  $Om||C_{max}$ .

In this paper we consider a generalization of shop problems with two machines, obtained by assuming that a job must be transported from one machine to the other. Thus a *transportation time* is defined, for each job, and the latter operation can start only when the given time is spent, after the completion of the first operation.

In the following section 2 we give the formal definition of the two problems and briefly review the existing literature. In section 4 we consider the flow-shop problem and we prove that it is strongly NP-hard even when the processing times of the two operations are identical. In the last section we show that the same time complexity holds for the open-shop problem with identical processing times.

## 2 Notations and Literature Review

We first consider the flow-shop problem. Given are 2 machines and a set  $J$  of  $n$  jobs each consisting of two operations. For each job  $j \in J$  the first operation has to be processed by machine 1 and the second operation by machine 2; the processing time is identical for both operations and is denoted by  $p_j$ . Furthermore, for each job a minimum delay  $l_j$  (time lag) is given between the completion of the first operation of job  $j$  and the start of the second one. Our goal is to find a schedule that minimizes the maximum total completion time of any job. The problem can be denoted as  $F2|p_{1j} = p_{2j}, l_j|C_{max}$ .

More formally, let  $S_j^i \in \mathbb{R} \cup \{0\}$  denote the start time of the unique operation of job  $j$  that needs to be processed by machine  $i$ . The following requirements have to be satisfied:

$$S_j^2 \geq S_j^1 + p_j + l_j, \quad j \in J \quad (1)$$

$$S_{j_1}^i \geq S_{j_2}^i + p_{j_2} \text{ or } S_{j_2}^i \geq S_{j_1}^i + p_{j_1} \quad i \in \{1, 2\}, j_1 \in J, j_2 \in J, j_1 \neq j_2 \quad (2)$$

Constraint (1) ensures that the second operation of each job  $j$  starts at least  $l_j$  time units after the completion of the first operation, whereas (2) is a “disjunctive” constraint which ensures that the processing of two different jobs on the same machine do not overlap.

The *length*  $C$  of a schedule  $S$  is  $\max_{j \in J} (S_j^2 + p_j)$ , i.e., the earliest time at which all operations are completed. The problem is to find an *optimal* schedule which satisfies (1) and (2) and has minimum length.

A schedule can be completely characterized by the order  $j_1^1, \dots, j_n^1$  of the jobs on machine 1 and the order  $j_1^2, \dots, j_n^2$  of the jobs on machine 2. However, if the order on the first machine is given, the optimal complete solution can be obtained in polynomial time by scheduling the jobs on machine 1 as early as possible (i.e. by setting  $S_1^1 = 0$ ;  $S_j^1 = S_j^1 - 1 + p_j$  for  $j = 2, \dots, n$ ), and by scheduling the jobs on machine 2 as in the optimal solution of a single machine problem with release times given by  $r_j = S_j^1 + p_j + l_j \forall j$ .

In the case of the open-shop we use the same notation introduced for the flow-shop. The problem is defined by

$$S_j^1 \geq S_j^2 + p_j + l_j \text{ or } S_j^2 \geq S_j^1 + p_j + l_j, \quad j \in J, \quad (3)$$

and by (2). Constraint (3) is the equivalent of (1) for the flow-shop. The objective function is: minimize  $\max_{j \in J} (S_j^1 + p_j, S_j^2 + p_j)$ . To characterize a schedule it is necessary

to give both the order of the jobs on machine 1 and 2. The problem can be denoted by  $O2|p_{1j} = p_{2j}, l_j|C_{max}$ .

It is well known that problems  $F2||C_{max}$  and  $O2||C_{max}$  are solvable in polynomial time (Johnson [1954], Gonzalez and Shani [1976]). Both the open-shop and the flow shop become NP-hard when three machines are considered:  $O3||C_{max}$  is NP-hard in ordinary sense (Gonzalez and Shani [1976]) whereas  $F3||C_{max}$  is strongly NP-hard (Garey, Johnson and Sethi [1976]).

The flow-shop with two machines and transportation times has been proved to be strongly NP-hard by Lenstra [-]. The detail of the proof are reported in Dell'Amico [1993] where it is also proved that the preemptive version of the problem remains strongly NP-hard.

The open-shop with two machines and identical transportation times has been proved to be NP-hard in Rayward-Smith and Rebaine [1992]. This problem remains NP-hard even if the processing times on one machine are all zero (Strusevich [1994]). The problem with different transportation times, but restricted in such a way that the maximum transportation time do not exceeds the length of the minimum processing time is solvable in  $O(n)$  (Rebaine and Strusevich [1995]).

### 3 Flow shop

In this section we consider the two machine flow shop problem introduced in section 2. We first give a lower bound on the optimal solution value and than we use it to proof the strongly NP-hardness of the problem.

#### 3.1 Lower bound

Suppose a schedule  $S$  with length  $C$  is given: we will derive a minimum value for  $C$  depending on the processing times and the delays. Let  $j_1^1, \dots, j_n^1$  denote the order of the jobs on machine 1 and  $j_1^2, \dots, j_n^2$  denote the order of the jobs on machine 2. Our goal is to prove that

$$C \sum_{j=1}^n p_j \geq \left( \sum_{j=1}^n p_j \right)^2 + \sum_{j=1}^n p_j (l_j + p_j) \quad (4)$$

which immediately gives the lower bound

$$LBF = \sum_{j=1}^n p_j + \sum_{j=1}^n p_j (l_j + p_j) / \sum_{j=1}^n p_j. \quad (5)$$

Let us start by considering the difference between the starting time of the second and the first operation of a job  $j \in J$ , i.e.  $S_j^2 - S_j^1$ . Using constraint (1) and an algebraic

manipulation we obtain:

$$\sum_{j=1}^n p_j(p_j + l_j) \leq \sum_{j=1}^n p_j(S_j^2 - S_j^1) = \sum_{j=1}^n p_j S_j^2 - \sum_{j=1}^n p_j S_j^1 = \sum_{l=1}^n p_{j_l^2} S_{j_l^2}^2 - \sum_{l=1}^n p_{j_l^1} S_{j_l^1}^1. \quad (6)$$

Reminding that any operation is completed at time  $C$  we can observe that the maximum starting time for the second operation of a job  $j_l^2$  is

$$S_{j_l^2}^2 \leq C - \sum_{k=l}^n p_{j_k^2}. \quad (7)$$

Since no job can be scheduled before time zero we also have job  $j_l^1$  is

$$S_{j_l^1}^1 \geq \sum_{k=1}^{l-1} p_{j_k^1}. \quad (8)$$

Using inequalities (6), (7) and (8) we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{j=1}^n p_j(p_j + l_j) &\leq \sum_{l=1}^n p_{j_l^2} (C - \sum_{k=l}^n p_{j_k^2}) - \sum_{l=1}^n p_{j_l^1} \sum_{k=1}^{l-1} p_{j_k^1} \\ &= C \sum_{l=1}^n p_{j_l^2} - \sum_{l=1}^n p_{j_l^2} \sum_{k=l}^n p_{j_k^2} - \sum_{l=1}^n p_{j_l^1} \sum_{k=1}^{l-1} p_{j_k^1} \\ &= C \sum_{j=1}^n p_j - \sum_{j=1}^n (p_{j_l^2})^2 - \sum_{l=1}^n \sum_{k=l+1}^n p_{j_l^2} p_{j_k^2} - \sum_{l=1}^n \sum_{k=1}^{l-1} p_{j_l^1} p_{j_k^1} \end{aligned} \quad (9)$$

Note that the last two terms in (9) are independent of the sequence of jobs, indeed any product  $p_r p_s$  with  $r \in J, s \in J$  and  $r \neq s$  is added exactly once in each of the two sums. Therefore we have

$$\begin{aligned} &\sum_{j=1}^n (p_{j_l^2})^2 + \sum_{l=1}^n \sum_{k=l+1}^n p_{j_l^2} p_{j_k^2} + \sum_{l=1}^n \sum_{k=1}^{l-1} p_{j_l^1} p_{j_k^1} \\ &= \sum_{j=1}^n (p_j)^2 + \sum_{l=1}^n \sum_{k=l+1}^n p_l p_k + \sum_{l=1}^n \sum_{k=1}^{l-1} p_l p_k \\ &= \left( \sum_{j=1}^n p_j \right)^2 \end{aligned} \quad (10)$$

From (9) and (10) we immediately obtain inequality (6) and the required lower bound.

Note that when the lower bound  $LBF$  is equal to the optimum completion time  $C$ , all the inequalities used to obtain the bound must hold with the “=” sign, so we have that:

- (i) for any job the second operation starts exactly at the completion time of the first operation plus the transportation time (inequality (6));
- (ii) the last operation on the second machine is completed at  $C$  and no idle time exists between two consecutive operations on machine 2 (inequality (7));
- (iii) the first machine must process all operations from time 0 and without any idle time between two operations (inequality (8)).

### 3.2 Proof of NP-hardness

In the following theorem we prove that the flow shop problem described above is NP-hard.

**Theorem 3.1** *The flow shop problem  $F2|p_{1j} = p_{2j}, l_j|C_{max}$  is NP-hard.*

*Proof:* We give a polynomial-time reduction from the 3-PARTITION problem to the decision variant of this scheduling problem.

The 3-PARTITION problem is defined as follows: given are  $3N$  items of size  $x_k \in \mathbb{R}$  with

- $\sum_{k=1}^{3N} x_k = NX$  for some  $X \in \mathbb{R}$  and
- $\forall 1 \leq k \leq 3N : \frac{X}{4} < x_k < \frac{X}{2}$ ;

the question is whether there exists a partition  $K_1, \dots, K_N$  of  $\{1, \dots, 3N\}$  such that

$$\sum_{k \in K_l} x_k = X \text{ for all } 1 \leq l \leq N.$$

3-PARTITION is proved to be strongly NP-complete by Garey and Johnson [1975]. Note that each set  $K_l$  in such a 3-partition contains exactly 3 items.

Consider an instance of 3-PARTITION: we transform it into an instance of the decision variant of problem  $F$  such that there exists a feasible schedule of a certain length if and only if a 3-partition exists.

The transformation is as follows. We define  $4N$  jobs:

$$p_j = x_j \quad l_j = (2N + 1)X - x_j \quad \text{for } 1 \leq j \leq 3N, \quad (11)$$

$$p_j = X \quad l_j = (2N - 2)X \quad \text{for } 3N + 1 \leq j \leq 4N. \quad (12)$$

We call the jobs of the first group *partition jobs* and the jobs of the second group *forcing jobs*. Now we require a schedule of length at most  $4NX$ .

Let us compute lower bound  $LBF$  for the above instance of problem  $F$ . We have

$$\sum_{j=1}^{3N} p_j = \sum_{j=3N+1}^{4N} p_j = NX$$

and

$$\sum_{j=1}^{3N} p_j(l_j + p_j) = NX(2N + 1)X, \quad \sum_{j=3N+1}^{4N} p_j(l_j + p_j) = NX(2N - 1)X,$$

thus the bound is  $LBF = 4NX$ .

We first show that if a YES answer exists for a given instance of 3-PARTITION then the corresponding schedule of  $F$  has an optimal schedule of length  $4NX$ . We schedule each forcing job  $j$  with  $S_j^1 = (2(j - 3N - 1) + 1)X$  and  $S_j^2 = S_j^1 + (2N - 1)X$  thus leaving exactly  $N$  empty buckets of length  $X$  in  $[0, 2NX)$ , on machine 1, and  $N$  in  $[2NX, 4NX)$ , on machine 2 (see Figure 1).

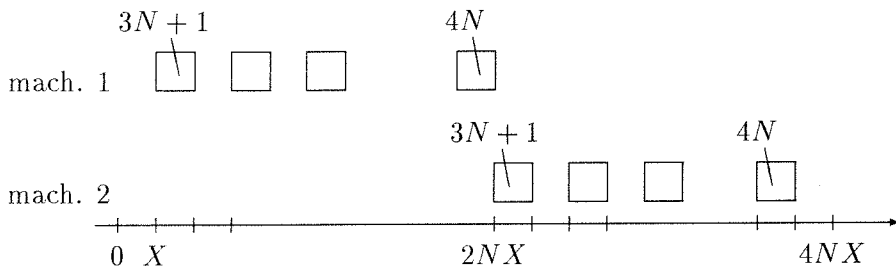


Figure 1: schedule of the forcing jobs.

Since a partition into  $N$  triples exists then the  $i$ -th empty bucket on machine 1 can be exactly filled with the first operation of the three jobs corresponding to the three items in  $K_i$ . It is not difficult to see that the second operation of these jobs can be scheduled in  $[2NX + (2i - 1)X, 2NX + 2iX)$  so that the  $i$ -th bucket on machine 2 is completely filled. The resulting schedule occupies all the interval  $[0, 2NX)$  on machine 1 and the interval  $[2NX, 4NX)$  on machine 2 so giving an optimal schedule of length  $4NX$ .

Now suppose that a schedule  $S$  exists with length  $C = 4NX$ . From lower bound (5) we know that the schedule is optimal and that no schedule can have a smaller completion time. Moreover, since the bound is tight, we know that the three conditions (i)–(iii) in the previous section hold. Hence the time interval  $[0, 2NX)$  on machine 1 and the time interval  $[2NX, 4NX)$  on machine 2 must be completely occupied and the first operation on the second machine must start at time  $2NX$ . Since the delay for each partition job is larger than  $2NX$ , the second operation of such a job cannot start at time  $2NX$ . Hence, the operation starting at time  $2NX$  must belong to a forcing job, say  $k$ . Since no difference must exist between  $S_j^2$  and  $S_j^1 + p_j + l_j$ , for all  $j$ , then the first operation of the forcing job  $k$  starts at time  $X$ , leaving the time interval  $[0, X)$  empty. The only operations that can occupy this interval must be operations belonging to partition jobs and the sum of their processing times must be exactly  $X$ . Reminding that  $X/4 < p_j < X/2$  for each partition job  $j$ , we have that there must be exactly three operations in  $[0, X)$ . The corresponding second operations completely fill the interval  $[2NX + X, 2NX + 2X)$ .



So now the interval  $[0, 2X)$  on the first machine and the interval  $[2NX, 2NX + 2X)$  on the second machine is occupied. We can reason similarly for each next interval of length  $2X$ , thus, by induction, we have that on the first machine the interval  $[0, 2NX)$  can be divided into  $N$  parts of length  $2X$ . Each such part starts with three operations of total length  $X$  that belong to partition jobs, and finishes with an operation of length  $X$  that belongs to a forcing job. Therefore, this schedule induces a 3-partition of the given instance of 3-PARTITION, which concludes the proof.  $\square$

## 4 Open Shop

The following theorem proves that the open shop problem introduced in section 2 is strongly NP-hard.

**Theorem 4.1** *The open shop problem  $O2|p_{1j} = p_{2j}, l_j|C_{max}$  is strongly NP-hard.*

*Proof:* We use a transformation from 3-PARTITION similar to that introduced in the previous section for the flow shop problem.

Given an instance of 3-PARTITION we define an instance of open-shop with  $4N + 1$  jobs. As in the case of flow shop the first  $4N$  jobs are partition and forcing jobs with processing times and delays defined by (11) and (12). The last job has processing time  $p_{4N+1} = 2NX$  and zero delay. We look for a schedule of length  $4NX$ .

If a 3-partition exists a schedule of length  $4NX$  can be obtained by scheduling the first  $4N$  jobs as in the proof of theorem 3.1 and the remaining job with the operation on machine 2 starting at time zero, and the operation on machine 1 starting at time  $2NX$ . The solution has length  $4NX$  and is optimal since it is equal to the trivial lower bound

$$LBO = \sum_{j=1}^n p_j / 2.$$

We now show that if a schedule of length  $4NX$  exists, then a solution to the corresponding instance of 3-PARTITION is defined. In any solution of length  $4NX$  the job  $4N + 1$  has to start at time 0 on one machine and to finish at time  $4NX$  on the other machine. Let us suppose that job  $4N + 1$  starts its operation on the second machine at time 0 (and its operation on the first machine at time  $2NX$ ). It is easy to see that with this assumption we have no lack of generality, indeed the equality of the processing times and the absence of precedence between the operations of a same job, allows to renumber the machines without changing the solution structure. In this schedule the operations on machine 1 precedes the operations on machine 2, for jobs  $1 \dots, 4N$ . Therefore the relations used to obtain lower bound  $LBF$  are valid for jobs  $1 \dots, 4N$ . In particular one can see that conditions (i)–(iii) in section 3.1 hold. Applying the same reasoning used in the proof of theorem 3.1 one can see that this schedule induces a 3-partition and the proof is concluded.  $\square$

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