School mathematics varies considerably from one country to another. While intended curricula may appear similar, and in many ways they are, the manifestation of the intended curriculum varies greatly from one cultural context to another. In part, this is because teachers work within two additional curricula typically hidden from policy-makers. They work within a received curriculum, which comprises those beliefs and practices that are so deeply embedded in the collective mind-set as to be beyond conscious criticism. They work, also, within an idealised curriculum or the experientially formed beliefs and practices that are articulable and unique to the individual. Drawing on recent research on European mathematics classrooms, I shall show how the different curricula come into being and how their interactions determine the quality of learners’ experiences of mathematics.